

1. What is the Galveston Housing Authority?

The Galveston Housing Authority (GHA) is a quasi-governmental agency that was established to provide decent, safe, and affordable housing accommodations to low income families earning up to the 80% of the area median income, handicapped, and elderly persons.

2. How is the GHA structured?

GHA is governed by a Board of Commissioners and comprised of five members, and a city ex-officio. The executive and administrative staff is led by the Executive Director.

3. What is the mission of the GHA?

Provide and professionally manage an adequate supply of safe, affordable housing of reasonable quality for low to moderate income persons while administering programs that offer opportunities for residents to advance in society. Be a leader and work in partnership with other agencies to enhance the quality of life of all persons of low to moderate income in the city.

4. What programs does the GHA offer?

GHA operates and administers the following programs: Low Income Public Housing, Section 8, Housing Choice Voucher Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP), DHAP-Ike, Disaster Voucher Program (DVP) Homeownership, Resident Services, and Housing Development.

5. What is Area Median Income?

Area median income is the midpoint in the family-income range for a metropolitan statistical area or for the non-metro parts of a state. The figure often is used as a basis to stratify incomes into extremely low, very low, low, moderate and upper ranges.

6. What is affordable housing?

In order for housing to be considered "affordable," the rent and utilities must total no more than 30 percent of a family's household income. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened.

7. Define: Extremely-Low-Income; Very-Low-Income; and Low Income for a family of four?

- Extremely-Low-Income = \$0 - \$19,150
- Very-Low-Income = \$19,150 - \$31,900
- Low-Income = \$31,900 - \$51,050

Recent job postings by the City of Galveston during August and September of 2009, reveals that the average City worker will be earning well below the needed \$34,640 for a two-bedroom rental.

8. What happened to the four housing developments after Hurricane Ike?

Hurricane Ike destroyed all four of GHA's main public housing developments, built in the 1940's & 1960's, namely: Oleander Homes, Magnolia Homes, Palm Terrace, & Cedar Terrace. These four sites comprised all of the family units that GHA operated under the federal public housing program.

9. What does the GHA do to help residents achieve self-sufficiency?

GHA has always been committed to assisting the residents of its communities in achieving self-sufficiency by providing opportunities for training and employment. GHA staffed on-site learning centers that provided Adult Basic Computer classes, GED preparation training, Life skills, After school youth programs, etc. GHA also has a Homeownership program and a Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS).

10. What is Section 3?

Section 3 is an employment opportunity for low-income residents where contractors are encouraged to hire qualified low-income residents to job training and placement activities, and providing program coordination that facilitates economic opportunities for families. GHA also provides employment opportunities by hiring qualified residents of GHA communities for available GHA positions.

11. Does the GHA encourage home ownership?

Yes, GHA received funding from HUD in the form of a ROSS Homeownership Grant that assists Housing Choice Voucher participants with Self Sufficiency and Homeownership.

The GHA also offers a Homeownership Program on homes newly constructed and/or totally renovated by GHA. The homes are sold below cost, resulting in affordable mortgages for low to moderate-income persons. In compliance with HUD Regulations, first preference is to Public Housing residents, followed by those enrolled in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, and then to the General Public.

Two excellent examples of the Housing Authority's dedication to providing affordable homeownership opportunities to low to moderate-income persons with an emphasis on the construction of homes that complement and enhance the community are the Cornerstone and The Oaks. Both neighborhoods have enabled families to realize the American dream by purchasing their own home while increasing their personal equity. The Oaks, located on 45th Street, is currently nearing total occupancy with 27 of 28 houses either under contract or sold. Cornerstone, located between 33rd and 34th Street, is completely sold out and has contributed greatly to the overall neighborhood revitalization of the surrounding areas.

12. Is the GHA audited?

Yes, The GHA is subject to the Single Audit Act and Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Circular A-133, Audit of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations. The Single Audit Act requires that non-federal entities expending \$500,000 or more a year in federal awards have a single or program-specific audit in accordance with the provisions of the Act's audit requirements, with zero findings.

13. Who developed the redevelopment options for GHA?

The GHA commissioned Civic Design Associates through an "RFQ" to study several alternative housing solutions for the replacement of 529 public housing units damaged by flooding during

Hurricane Ike. The reconstruction of 40 elderly duplexes on the site of the former Palm Terrace development is already under way through a separate contract with another design firm.

14. Was the community involved in the planning process?

The GHA has actively engaged the public in its decision making process. Following Hurricane Ike, GHA hosted four public participation meetings at the Holland House community facility to involve the public in discussions regarding redevelopment of public housing, as well as, affordable housing needs in Galveston. The CDA solicited public input into the creation of design alternatives by leading several public workshops, by circulating an online survey, by producing on-site “design studio,” and soliciting public comment.

15. Will all 569 housing units be built on the four original sites?

GHA remains committed to replacing all of the units lost during Hurricane Ike. With the units being reduced at The Oaks IV to 40 from 104, the additional 64 units will be built either as a part of one of the three other sites or on surrounding sites. The GHA Board of Commissioners recently approved a plan to return the 569 lost units with 390 to be built on the original four sites and 179 on scattered sites.

16. Will the new units be designed to withstand another Hurricane Ike?

Yes, The Multi-Family (MF) - 1 base zoning allows for a height of three stories or 45 feet above a platform built above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE), and 55 feet above prevailing grade. All of the sites will allow for this height to be exceeded with a Special Use Permit, subject to the provisions of the Height and Density Overlay regulations as specified in Section 29-66 of the code.

17. When they are completed will the housing projects look anything like they did before?

GHA has a unique opportunity to create model communities through its redevelopment efforts. Over the last ten years, several hundred thousand public housing units have been rebuilt throughout the U.S., resulting in market comparable units and best practice design models that GHA will attempt to employ.

18. What are the basic objectives of the designs?

The redevelopment of the four housing sites is an opportunity to integrate the residents and the units more fully into the neighborhood. With the planned improvements to the sites, the GHA is seeking to align its physical improvements with the planned community revitalization. The plans for these sites take into account the following concepts: Human Scale, Diversity, Mixed Use, Sensible Central Open Spaces, and Deconcentration of Poverty and Density.

19. Will these housing developments be built using “sustainable” or “green” building guidelines?

The Sustainability Principles are the overarching goals for the project partners involved in the redevelopment of the four housing sites. To achieve these principles, development project partners will work towards having all new construction and rehabilitation development projects incorporate green building metrics that serve as benchmarks for the design, construction, and operation of high performing green buildings.

20. Who will live in these units?

Prior to Hurricane Ike, the GHA was providing public housing to 979 households and Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to 1,213 households, 697 choosing to rent on the Island. An additional 1,222 were on the public housing waiting list and 1,766 were on the HCV waiting list. This resulted in 1,676 households receiving assistance from GHA and 2,988 on GHA waiting lists plus more than 5,000 additional households who, based on income, were eligible for public housing but were not receiving housing assistance from GHA and were not on the GHA waiting lists.

21. Will the architecture be compatible with its surrounding neighborhoods?

The goal is to build healthy sustainable new communities centering on the new housing developments. At the heart of this effort is the development and implementation of a sustainable neighborhood plan based on a process of inclusiveness. Architectural designs will be created to make the units fit into the existing neighborhood and provide more modern amenities to the residents.

22. How much will the reconstruction of the 569 units cost?

The total projected cost is approximately \$88.5 million. GHA has firm commitments for a portion of the funding for the project but will need to compete for both local and national pools of funds to secure the balance.

23. Will the GHA assume any conventional debt for the reconstruction?

In creating the financial models for the development of all four sites, GHA is taking into account the amount of income to be generated through rent at each of the properties and the ability of each of the developments to pay for conventional debt.

24. Does GHA own the land on which it wants to build?

The GHA owns the properties free and clear of mortgages or liens. The acquisition value of the land and buildings has been derived by using assessment data from the Property Appraiser's Office and comparable sales in the area. It is difficult to find comparables with similar square footage to the properties since the units previously were not market comparable.

25. Who does GHA serve?

The GHA serves families who are low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income as determined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. In addition, the approval of the conversion process by HUD requires that the former residents get every opportunity to rent or purchase the newly constructed units if they qualify. GHA will give the former residents of the four sites, other public housing residents, Section 8 assisted residents and income eligible persons on the Authority's waiting lists first priority to rent or purchase the new units. Multiple subsidy sources will be required to make the units affordable to low-and very low-income families.

26. What is the role of Low Income Housing Tax Credits?

Low income housing tax credits represent the most significant source of funding for affordable housing. The financing strategy will depend heavily upon the best strategy for maximizing equity from investors in the low income housing tax credits for the development.

27. What is role of HOPE VI?

The HOPE VI Program has catalyzed the replacement of old “barracks style” and high-rise public housing in communities such as Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia and Seattle. GHA is planning to apply to the HOPE VI Program for funding with the goal that the program will provide development and supportive service funding. GHA sees this as an opportunity to apply national best practices to the design of the new units.

Since 1993, HOPE VI has been the mechanism driving the revitalization of the Nation’s most distressed public housing developments providing grants and unprecedented flexibility to address the housing and social service needs of their residents. Any public housing authority (PHA) that operates public housing units is eligible to apply for HOPE VI funding. HOPE VI permits expenditures for the capital costs of demolition, construction, rehabilitation, development of replacement housing and community and supportive services.

28. What is a “Project-Based Voucher”?

In the Project Based Voucher Program (PBVP) the assistance is “attached to the structure.” The PHA enters into a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract with an owner for units in existing housing or in newly constructed or rehabilitated housing. In the case of newly constructed or rehabilitated housing, the housing is developed under an agreement between the owner and the PHA. In the agreement, the PHA agrees to execute a HAP contract after the owner completes the construction or rehabilitation of the units. During the term of the HAP Contract, the PHA will make housing assistance payments to the owner for units leased and occupied by eligible families.

29. What is the timetable for reconstruction?

Timeframe-Schedule Construction on the former sites of Palm Terrace is approximately one year, and for Oleander Homes, Cedar Terrace, and Magnolia Homes it is estimated to be completed within 2-3 years.

30. Why is the Housing Authority proposing to build housing in a flood plain?

Recently there has been opposition voiced to developing housing for low to moderate income families based on the location of the demolished sites which is within a flood plain. The housing authority, as an agency responsible for spending federal dollars, has always complied with federal environmental regulations.

The housing authority cares about families and responsibly spends federal dollars to provide affordable housing. The housing authority is proposing to redevelop on all four sites, including building single family homes and duplexes within neighborhoods. Certainly, as part of the development process, environmental requirements will be addressed.

For example, an environmental review has been done and submitted to the City for the next phase of development in the The Oaks. The review does show that the proposed development at the Oaks will be in the 100-year floodplain.

A recent article outlines the eight-step process mandated by Executive Order 11988 regarding development in a floodplain. The process was put into place to allow localities using federal funds to responsibly use that funding in the 100 year flood plain. These funds and the environmental requirements that must be met are not limited to the development being proposed by the housing authority.

With the majority of the land mass on Galveston Island within the 100-year flood plain: the city, other governmental bodies, the housing authority ,the school district, the port authority, non-profits and for-profits would be constrained from using federal funds if certain requirements are not met. This would mean that the city would not be allowed to help homeowners in the city with repairs that are in the 100-year flood plain, nor restore the businesses in the downtown and the Strand because they are also in the 100-year flood plain.

The purpose of Executive Order 11988 is for the housing authority to review the development of housing in the 100 year flood plain and to look at other viable options. The purpose is not to stop development but to mitigate its impacts on the development. The housing authority will publish its findings as it requests HUD's approval for the project. When subsequent developments are designed, the housing authority will comply with all of the requirements of Executive Order 11988. The City will be responsible for handling all public notices, publishing findings and request the release of funds for all CDBG dollars allocated to the development of housing by GHA. The City, by requesting a presentation of the development plan, is making efforts to ensure that CDBG funds are spent appropriately.

Consensus building among Galvestonians regarding redevelopment of affordable housing is important to the housing authority. The efforts of the community to become informed regarding environmental regulations that effect the housing authority is welcomed by housing authority staff. As such, the housing authority is offering workshops to educate the community about various programs and regulations.

The Galveston Housing Authority and its development partners are keenly aware of the design criteria that all housing needs to meet in the 100-year flood plain. The housing authority will meet or surpass all required standards of construction and emergency preparedness.

