



THE GALVESTON
NORTHSIDE
TASKFORCE



May 25, 2013

Michael Kovacs
City Manager

Dorothy "Dottie" Palumbo
City Attorney

Sterling Patrick
Director, Grant and Housing Department

City of Galveston
P.O. Box 779
823 Rosenberg
Galveston, Texas 77553
VIA EMAIL

Re: Scheduling negotiation meeting between Collaborating Organizations and City of Galveston

Dear Michael, Dottie and Sterling,

The Collaborating Organizations¹ appreciate your willingness and desire to meet to discuss our concerns surrounding the demolition and condemnation of residences in our historic Northside community,² relocation assistance for LMI homeowners in Round 2, and the release of CDBG infrastructure funds for city water projects. You will recall we briefly visited on January 30th about our concerns for the future of the Northside and Galveston and the release of CDBG funds for infrastructure when we were invited to the meeting arranged by Council member Cornelia Banks that included representatives of GLO, Texas Appleseed, Texas Low Income Housing

¹ The membership of the coalition known as the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations varies depending on the issue. Generally the CO is comprised of: NAACP Galveston Unit 6180, LULAC Galveston Council 151, Galveston County Coalition for Justice, Northside Task Force, Gulf Coast Interfaith, Barbour's Chapel Community Development Corporation, NAACP Mainland Branch Unit 6201, NAACP Dickinson/Bay Area Branch Unit 6280, LULAC Texas City Council 255, and Galveston County Homeless Coalition.

² The Northside community, historically neglected by the City, is located north of Broadway, from Rosenberg (25th) on the east to approximately 46th Street on the west and includes Ball St (Ave H) as the main corridor and the neighborhoods bounded by Broadway on the south to Market Street on the north. Not far from this neighborhood boundary, on June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger and 2,000 federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to take possession of Texas and enforce the emancipation of its slaves after Granger read the contents of General Order No. 3.

Information Services, and City of Galveston. At that meeting we discussed our deep concerns about six items:

1. Moratorium on tin buildings on the Northside.
2. Move the water tanks.
3. Funding to eliminate and mitigate flooding on the Northside.
4. CO role in Northside infrastructure planning.
5. Adopt a strong Sec. 3 policy.
6. Redraw the Northside residential zoning lines.

We received positive comments and assurances about some of the items. We appreciate the city council's vote on May 23rd supporting a temporary moratorium on tin buildings on the Northside. Obviously, however, our deep concern about the recovery and redevelopment of the Northside community is not static as we move into another year of recovery.³ A recovery that has been robust in some neighborhoods and, as we all must acknowledge, painfully and unfairly slow in others.

As we wind down Round 1 and begin Round 2 and continue our long wait for the concrete to begin pouring at Magnolia Homes and Cedar Terrace, and all the while not forgetting the historic use and misuse of CDBG and tax funds in poor Galveston neighborhoods, we must bring to the table our concerns about other important issues that should be positively addressed.

7. Temporary relocation assistance during Round 2.⁴

Relocation assistance of up to \$3000 may be needed for rent and storage for some of the LMI families who will be forced to leave their homes during the rehabilitation or rebuilding phase of Round 2 that is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2013.⁵ This assistance will be used for a maximum of 90 days whereupon URS or its contractor will be responsible for any additional temporary relocation expenses based on the public representations and assurances of URS. Further, assistance and service is requested in the location and retention of a pool of cooperative landlords who will be willing to enter into a short term lease. The provision of this temporary housing assistance meets the first objective of the City of Galveston's CDBG 2013 Community Development & Housing Objectives:

1. To provide and expand the supply of safe, decent, and affordable housing through the rehabilitation of existing residential property and the development of new residential property for low-moderate income persons;

³ The Collaborating Organizations were joined by Friends in November, 2012 in an effort to ensure the redevelopment of the Northside community: former mayors Barbara Crews, Lyda Ann Thomas and Joe Jaworski; former GHA chairs Art Mabasa, Paula Neff, and Betty Massey; Galveston Housing Recovery Outreach Committee co-chairs Chula Ross-Sanchez and Laura Murrell; GHA board member Raymond Lewis.

⁴ Please see the written public comment of the Collaborating Organizations submitted to the Grants and Planning Department on May 6th.

⁵ URS has previously advised us that the contractors will be responsible for providing homeowners funds for rent and storage and related relevant expenses if their building efforts are not completed within 90 days.

8. Code enforcement.

LMI families and others facing the long road of recovery sometimes face code enforcement deadlines that are overwhelming. We request that compliance with the code enforcement process be suspended until all reasonable opportunities for recovery have been exhausted under Round 1 and Round 2 and so long as the property has been made safe and secure to the public.

9. City power to condemn, demolish, and use eminent domain.

Our recovery from Hurricane Ike will enter its 6th year in a few months. There are several more years to go. Poor residents of Galveston may take longer to recover. We request that until all reasonable opportunities for recovery have been exhausted under Round 1 and Round 2, the City of Galveston suspend its enforcement of any eminent domain, condemnation or demolition efforts against any residential property. This suspension would exist so long as the property remains safe and secure to the public.

10. Use CDBG and other economic tools to establish a full service grocery store in the Northside community.

We believe our upcoming meeting to discuss our mutual concern for the recovery of Galveston will be beneficial to our entire city. However, we believe our currently scheduled meeting for Tuesday, May 28th will not provide adequate time to prepare for our meeting because prior to our meeting we request that you provide to us written documentation of the City of Galveston's good faith effort to address the six items that were discussed in our January 30th meeting and we also request a written reply to items 7-10 that are being presented to you in this letter. Further, we also request you provide us a draft of the letter you would like for us to sign and send to GLO in support of the City of Galveston obtaining the release of CDBG funds for the water infrastructure projects. We would like your written reply and the proposed letter on or before Tuesday, May 28th at 3:00 so that we can study it prior to a meeting that we propose be rescheduled to Thursday, May 30th at 10:00 in Room 100. In view of our requests and the upcoming Memorial Day holiday as well as your busy schedule on Tuesday, we believe rescheduling our meeting to Thursday is appropriate.

We look forward to our upcoming visit. Please contact Gulf Coast Interfaith if you have any questions.

Yours respectfully,

THE GALVESTON COUNTY COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

The Galveston Northside Taskforce

By: *Lillian McGrew*

Lillian McGrew, Chairperson

The Galveston County Coalition for Justice

By: *Leon Phillips*

Leon Phillips, President

Gulf Coast Interfaith

By: *Stephen McIntyre*

Stephen McIntyre, Leader

Joe Compian

Joe Compian, Leader

NAACP, Galveston Unit #6180

By: *David Miller*

David Miller, President

LULAC, Galveston Council #151

By: *Anna Olivares*

Anna Olivares, President

(All Signatures by Permission)

cc: Maddie Sloan, Texas Appleseed

John Henneberger, Texas Low Income Housing and Information Services

Fred Tombar, HUD

Jerry Patterson, GLO Commissioner

c/o Gulf Coast Interfaith, 1010 35th Street, Galveston, TX 77550
info@gulfcoastinterfaith.org