

Official from HUD visits isle

By Amanda Casanova | Posted: Wednesday, November 2, 2011 12:00 am

GALVESTON — A U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development official who works in fair housing and equal opportunity visited with island organizations and officials Tuesday.

Sara Pratt deputy assistant secretary for enforcement and programs met with representatives from organizations such as Gulf Coast Interfaith the League of United Latin American Citizens and other nonprofit groups to talk about the island's plan for public housing.

Despite some criticism the Galveston Housing Authority plans to build a mixed-income community of public housing tax-credit and market-rate units as part of the rebuild of 569 public housing units destroyed in Hurricane Ike.

Another 40 public housing units were built at The Oaks IV. The housing authority has said it would build a minimum of 50 scattered site units.

"(Pratt) was interested in a general status report of the rebuilding of public housing" Galveston Mayor Joe Jaworski said. "Everyone is anxious about 'where are the jobs for these people (when they move back)?' To hear HUD come in and tell us to keep an eye on the whole development of the island and find ways to talk about economic opportunities it's very refreshing."

As part of the rebuild the housing authority must develop a Section 3 policy which provides job training and employment opportunities for low-income residents.

Jaworski said the Section 3 policy would help to propel businesses on the island which then hopefully would boost the population.

"Small business(es) are struggling and one of the reasons is because our population is so low" he said. "It's an issue we all need to be concerned about."

Joe Compian of Gulf Coast Interfaith said the community organizations were looking forward to continuing to work with the department.

"We're focused on a developing a workable Section 3 policy for all three units of government — for the city the county and the housing authority" he said. "We want to encourage vibrant economic development and we want to address situations in our community that were exacerbated by Ike specifically homelessness. This is our only chance to do it right."