Three years after the destruction of Hurricane Ike, the supply of affordable housing in Galveston remains one of the many challenges to full recovery in the region. The following was developed to help aid in community dialogue and planning efforts directed at addressing this challenge.
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Galveston After Ike: *Moving Together Towards A Full Recovery*

*December 2011*

Jason Reece, Christy Rogers, Matthew Martin, Sarah Lawson, Jonathan Lee, Avrita Singh

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**Introduction**

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity at The Ohio State University is an applied research institute working nationally and internationally to identify solutions which expand opportunity for our most marginalized communities, in order to support a healthy, economically vibrant and just society. Affordable, sustainable and supportive housing is an important gateway to opportunity and for this reason the Institute has worked on issues related to housing development, affordability, fair housing and community development since its inception.

These efforts in dozens of communities over the past seven years have culminated in the “community of opportunity” model of housing and community development. Our model, which has been utilized in communities throughout the US, seeks to understand pathways and barriers to opportunities in each community, and to utilize a robust portfolio of policy tools to expand housing choice in high opportunity communities, to revitalize and bring opportunity to distressed areas, and to empower communities through transformative civic engagement.

After receiving numerous requests to apply some of our analytical tools to the affordable housing redevelopment issues in the aftermath of the hurricane for the Galveston area, the Institute responded with this report as part of our public service commitment to communities hard hit by natural disasters in the Gulf, as we have done in New Orleans, Alabama and Mississippi. Our mapping analysis of opportunity in the Galveston area does not represent the interests of any particular group involved in housing redevelopment in the region. We hope our work provides a framework to build consensus and identify solutions to producing an equitable, healthy and economically vibrant Gulf Coast community.

**Background**

On September 13, 2008, Hurricane Ike, one of the most destructive natural disasters to hit the United States, made landfall on the southeastern Texas coast, causing severe floods and damage. Galveston County, located partly on mainland Texas and partly on an island in the Gulf of Mexico, fell right in the center of Ike’s path of destruction. As a category 2 hurricane, Ike flooded 75% of Galveston Island and parts of the county mainland. The greatest level of damage occurred where the majority of low-income individuals resided. Ike flooded and damaged two thirds of the Island’s housing projects and increased the city’s homeless population from 6,000 to 12,000.¹

As the GHA June 2011 “Rebuilding Plan for Public Housing” states:

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¹ Source: Galveston Housing Authority
When Hurricane Ike struck Galveston Island ("Island") in September 2008, close to 88% of the residential units on the island were damaged; the majority sustained minor damage while approximately 1,000 were substantially damaged. At that time, GHA owned and operated 990 units of public housing including 356 units in two high rises for the elderly, 34 scattered sites, 20 new duplexes for the elderly, and 569 family units. More than half of GHA’s public housing stock was damaged beyond repair by the hurricane.

The City of Galveston declared the 569 previously occupied units at Magnolia Homes, Oleander Homes, Palm Terrace and Cedar Terrace unit for human occupancy and GHA subsequently moved to demolish the units in 2009. But prior to demolition, Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA), on behalf of its clients who are displaced tenants of GHA public housing, filed an Administrative Complaint on March 2, 2009 opposing plans to demolish Oleander Homes and Palm Terrace Addition. As a result of that complaint, GHA and LSLA entered into a Settlement Agreement on March 13, 2009. That Settlement Agreement specifically requires one-for-one replacement of the 569 multifamily public housing units to be demolished by GHA.

Compounding these losses is the fact that in the time leading up to Hurricane Ike, the share of Galveston County residents who were cost-burdened (spending 30% or more of household income on housing) increased for both renters and home owners (Figure 1). The largest rates of cost burdened households were found on primarily on the Island (Map 1). The impact of Hurricane Ike therefore exacerbated the already mounting challenge of housing affordability on Galveston Island and the rest of the county.

Table 1. Cost-Burdened Households by Tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(30% or more of household income was spent on housing)</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005-2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renters</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Residents</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Proportion of Cost Burdened Households (paying more than 30% of their income for housing) by Block Group from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

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2 Table 1 sources: U.S. Census 2000, American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-2009
The Strain on Gulf Coast Affordable Housing & Lessons from Katrina

Gulf Coast redevelopment has a particular set of challenges. These unique circumstances must be taken into account before designing any policy solutions for the community. In particular, a number of barriers to affordable housing have created impediments to housing access not found in other regions of the United States. The “base” of pre-hurricane affordable housing units is relatively small compared to other regions in the US, and post-hurricane displacement of low-income families and families of color has been documented across the region. It is imperative to take this into consideration when designing affordable housing and fair housing solutions for the region.

Gulf coast communities affected by Hurricane Katrina continue to experience challenges and search for solutions to replacing affordable housing. Affordable housing, especially affordable rental housing, tends to recover slower than the rest of the housing market. For example, homeowners, landlords, and renters in areas affected by Katrina flooding often held inadequate insurance before Katrina, and could not cover the loss and repair. Following Katrina, access to affordable housing has become more limited, due to a rise in rental rates and resident restrictions. Insurance premiums are costly as the perception of risk is ever-present. In Mississippi, rental rates raised 30%-50% in the year following Katrina because a great amount of rental housing was lost. In addition, Mississippi’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds given to rental units were disseminated slower than those given to homeowners, indicating a prioritization of homeowners over renters. Furthermore, as of March 2009, programs to “rebuild long-term workforce housing, public housing, and small rentals” had used only 50% of their funds while all the initial homeowner aid had been completely dispensed.

In the City of Galveston, clear disparities in population losses can also be seen in population figures from before and after Hurricane Ike (Figure 3). The city of Galveston lost 16.5% of its population between 2000 and 2010. Population loss for the White population during this time was 11.4%. Population loss for the African American community during this time was three times this rate, with the African American population declining by 36.7% in the City of Galveston between 2000 and 2010.

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4 Ibid.


Figure 3: Population Change by Race for the City of Galveston, Source: Census 2000 and Census 2010

**Opportunity Mapping**

The rationale for creating a map of opportunity is simple: access to quality affordable housing, education, employment, transportation, health and environmental amenities is essential for good life outcomes, particularly for children. We all intuitively know the importance of accessing good opportunities – enrolling in college, investing in homeownership, finding a high-quality primary care doctor. Accessing opportunity to improve our lives and our children’s lives motivates us to move across town, across the country, or across the world for better jobs, a quality education, and safety from violence. The ability to learn, dream, invest, and teach is dependent upon the strength and vibrancy of our opportunities. For most of us, we look first and foremost to our neighborhoods for opportunities. And we know that these neighborhood opportunities are not equal.

Fifty years of social science confirm this intuition, showing that racially isolated and economically poor neighborhoods restrict employment options for young people, contribute to poor health, expose children to extremely high rates of crime and violence, and house some of the least-performing schools. Kids who do not see neighbors leaving for work, who are unchallenged in school, who are afraid to go to their local park, and who can’t find healthy food in their community are exposed to cumulative disadvantages that can be hard to overcome.\(^8\) There is a reason that the old real estate adage is

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\(^8\) Recently, people in Seattle found that property values, more than income or education levels, were the best predictor of obesity rates, most likely due to the neighborhood presence or absence of grocery stores in safe walking distance with affordable, healthy food.\(^8\)

\(^9\) Children can be harmed by racial disparities even before birth. Black and Hispanic women are more than twice as likely to receive late or no prenatal care as White women.\(^9\) (Prenatal care prevents low birth weight that may lead to mental disabilities, vision problems, and neuromuscular disorders.) Racial health disparities seem to be growing, even as mortality rates overall have decreased. In 1950, a Black child was 1.6 times more likely to die before his or her first birthday than a White child; in 2002, they were 2.4 times as likely.\(^9\)
“location, location, location.” Good opportunities (and bad ones) often come bundled together. Location – this bundle of opportunities we can access—is important for everyone, but especially for our children.

The Kirwan Institute’s “Opportunity Mapping” initiatives analyze and communicate the cumulative structural disinvestment and segregation of people of color into declining and distressed neighborhoods. These maps are a powerful tool to help guide coalition building, service delivery and investment around issues faced by marginalized and isolated communities.

Opportunity mapping can delineate the needs, capacity and opportunities of marginalized communities, giving local partners and advocates a point of departure as well as a communications tool. Mapping can provide a valuable lens for identifying strategic points of investment, which is critical given the great needs (and limited resources) of marginalized communities. The importance of mapping assets and need is critical to spurring new thinking. As Rhonda Tsoi-A-Fatt, a Senior Policy Analyst specializing in low-income youth observes:

Communities of high youth distress are not monolithic. To effectively create long-term change, communities will need to invest time and resources into defining the dimensions of the problem, which will illuminate both the nature and scope of issues affecting young people...Mapping the assets in community (human, material, financial and natural) enables new partnerships to emerge, and brings new life and possibility to planning and implementation.10

Opportunity mapping can provide valuable information to address social justice and community development. The following are some of the issues which can be illuminated by opportunity mapping:

- What are the best strategies to create opportunity and provide neighborhood safety or stability in an opportunity poor community? Are policies depressing opportunity in an opportunity poor community? What neighborhoods are at risk of becoming low opportunity communities?
- What policies can help connect marginalized people with opportunities in the region? Where is affordable housing needed in opportunity rich communities within the region?
- Which neighborhoods are significantly impacting the quality of life and development of children in the region? What children are most at risk?
- What are the neighborhood conditions for neighborhoods impacted by foreclosure? Where should asset building activities be targeted? Where are predatory or discriminatory credit instruments limiting the economic potential for communities?

This mapping, research and community engagement and community advocacy model has several broad goals and advocacy outcomes. These goals could include:

- To raise significant attention and awareness to the structural and community barriers impacting marginalized communities, to identify policy solutions to remedy barriers to opportunity for

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marginalized communities. To provide a entry point for starting consensus building or collaborative discussions among stakeholders.

- To provide a local resource to identify areas of greatest need in communities and assess “gaps” where need is not being met by on-going advocacy efforts, local initiatives, investments or policy initiatives.
- To provide data, analysis and strategies to help build local organizational capacity in understanding challenges, needs and strategies for marginalized neighborhoods. To provide a collaborative framework to collectively organize the strategic planning of multiple stakeholders in communities.

Opportunity maps can best be used to consider recovery planning and investment that will help the county build a better future for all residents.

*Indicators of Neighborhood Opportunity*

Data were collected for block groups in Galveston County in three categories: education quality, economic health, and neighborhood stability. Six variables were collected to analyze educational opportunities: student poverty rate, math proficiency test scores, reading proficiency test scores, average years of experience of teachers, student-teacher ratio, and adult educational attainment level. Three indicators were collected to assess economic health: unemployment rate, number of jobs within 5 miles of each block group and the mean commute time to work for residents. Four indicators served as a comprehensive reflection of neighborhood stability and health: vacancy rates, foreclosure rates, poverty rates, and proximity to number toxic waste release sites. The summation of these three sub-indices is combined to create the final comprehensive opportunity index for each block group, which is an index representing all of the indicators discussed above. This index is then sorted into quintiles with the following labels, from highest to lowest: Very High Opportunity, High Opportunity, Moderate Opportunity, Low Opportunity, and Very Low Opportunity. For example, areas identified as Very High Opportunity represent the top 1/5 of the block groups (based on their comprehensive opportunity index score); conversely, areas identified as Very Low Opportunity represent the bottom 1/5 of the block groups (based on their comprehensive opportunity index score). Our analysis focused on residentially developed areas and excluded areas (census blocks) of very low population density.

*Maps and Analysis*

The following presents an overview of the final opportunity maps and analysis related to the Galveston area maps. We do caution that these maps present only a starting point for understanding the dynamics of opportunity in the region. Gulf Coast redevelopment carries with it many challenges that cannot be captured through these maps alone. The complexity of Gulf Coast redevelopment issues require civic engagement, input from a range of stakeholders, and careful implementation of fair housing policies. The examination of opportunity maps is a jumping-off point that can drive engagement toward equitable solutions, but is not a substitute for broad-based community discussion. Additionally, site based analysis related to locations for potential public housing will be an important supplement to this neighborhood-based opportunity analysis. Site-based conditions, such as immediate proximity to a polluting land use or isolation from the transportation system, for example, would be critical considerations to take into account when siting affordable housing.
Maps 1 and 2 show the final opportunity scores for Galveston County and the Island. The opportunity maps show that areas of high opportunity are concentrated mainly in two areas: on Galveston Island and the portion of the county closest to Houston. Lower opportunity areas were clustered in the southern portion of the County near Texas City and La Marque. On the Island, high opportunity block groups were primarily located south of Broadway, centered around 53rd Street and on the Western side of the Island. The Island contained relatively few low opportunity areas (compared to the County). When looking at population within the various opportunity areas, very clear racial disparities can be seen throughout the County (Figure 4). Nearly 55% of the County’s African American population in 2010 lived in low or very low opportunity areas (these areas represent 2/5’s of all block groups analyzed). Comparatively, only 24% of Whites, 15% of Asian and 34% of Hispanic residents lived in these low opportunity areas in the 2010 Census.

We also mapped the distribution of subsidized housing (utilizing HUD’s 2008 picture of subsidized housing) (Maps 3 and 4). Although this data is not ideal for identifying current distributions of subsidized housing, it is the best universal data set which was available to us for this analysis. Based on our analysis of the 2008 data, we found that the majority of public housing sites (66%) throughout Galveston County were located in low or very low opportunity areas (Figure 5). If possible, this analysis should be updated with more current and accurate data to understand the current landscape of affordable housing.
Location in a high or low opportunity block group does not tell the entire story in regards to neighborhood conditions. A housing site could be located in a low opportunity area but immediately adjacent to high opportunity areas, thus suggesting that the subsidized housing site does have some access to areas of opportunity. This proximity is very important in areas of smaller geography, such as an island. To understand the proximity to areas of opportunity for HUD subsidized housing sites, we analyzed their proximity to high opportunity areas. As seen in Maps 5 and 6, public housing units were in closer proximity to high opportunity census tracts on Galveston Island than in many parts of the mainland. The majority of subsidized housing sites were located within less than a ½ mile from high opportunity portions of the region. This proximity provides an opportunity to rebuild public housing in a way that assures continued access to these higher opportunity areas, and potentially anchor broader community revitalization initiatives.

Moving Forward – Recommendations for Equitable Rebuilding

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations flow from the findings of the opportunity analysis presented in this report:

- **Replace affordable housing options on the Island that were destroyed by Hurricane Ike:** cost-burdened households were increasing throughout the County prior to Ike and the largest rates of cost burden households were found on the Island. The need for improving the inventory of affordable housing was only exacerbated by the destruction that resulted from the hurricane. Experience from other areas impacted by hurricane damage illustrate that affordable housing reconstruction faces many obstacles and affirmative efforts to replace the pre-existing supply of affordable units must be a priority.

- **Rebuild in places that are in or near high-opportunity areas:** because opportunity is a critical element of success, affordable housing options should be replaced in proximity to opportunity so that residents have a chance to thrive. As the opportunity maps show, many of Galveston
Island’s block groups are higher opportunity areas which could be considered for additional public housing or affordable housing development.

- **Target redevelopment investments to places near anchor institutions like hospitals and universities:** since these institutions are sources of valuable services, jobs, and community development resources, investments near these go further and create more opportunity.

- **Ensure affordable housing is rebuilt in places with strong transportation infrastructure and options:** in order to create a holistic environment of opportunity, investments in affordable housing opportunities should be made in areas where there are also affordable and accessible transportation alternatives. Leveraging redevelopment investments near anchor institutions like hospitals and universities is another way to build continued access to opportunity. This means providing affordable housing options in and near areas of high opportunity, as well as ensuring that transportation options exist which will help facilitate access to opportunity. As the community redevelops and improves its portfolio of affordable housing, providing access to these areas will be important.

- **Engage and involve public housing residents in the redevelopment process:** because no effort to restore and improve housing opportunities throughout the County will be effective or complete without the participation of the residents themselves.

**Kirwan Comments Regarding the Proposed (October 2011) Master Development Work** (plans submitted by McCormack Baron Salazar)

In addition to the opportunity analysis, we also reviewed the recent Master Plan for the Island. When reviewing public housing plans, it is important to ask: how many units are being proposed? How many of those units can support families with children? Are these units in locations conducive to reaching high opportunity supports, services, and social networks?

We note the following concerns with the October proposed plan, in comparison with the June 21, 2011 GHA Rebuilding Plan for Public Housing:

- The October development plan does not seem to comply with the settlement agreement that requires one-for-one unit replacement. The October plan replaces only slightly more than half of the public housing units lost. Like other hurricane stricken communities, Galveston has a great need to replace its affordable housing stock, and a one to one replacement is needed to assure sufficient affordable units remain on the island.

- Although there are numerous high opportunity areas on the Island, the proposed locations are not in the higher opportunity areas on the Island (**Map 7**), which tend to be in the south and west section of downtown. In relation to our opportunity maps, some of the proposed locations are in low-density, low opportunity areas surrounded by industrial uses. When siting public housing, we need to ask: Can families walk or take public transportation safely to good grocery stores, schools and jobs from their new homes? Efforts should be made to integrate these units with high opportunity areas on the Island.

- It is not clear that fair housing requirements have been met, including those for accessible units.
• Sufficient units with three and four bedrooms must be provided for families with children who need them.

The opportunity framework and the maps and analysis in this report represent a valuable toolbox of policy development instruments. However, they cannot suffice for the kind of “ground-truthing” that must come from genuine community engagement, whereby the realities of residents can be clearly understood in the context of the opportunity landscape.

We hope this initial analysis can contribute to a meaningful process of decision making that is inclusive of all Galveston residents, but this process must be grounded in robust engagement for those residents who currently reside or have resided in public housing. The impact wrought by Hurricane Ike has been felt by all, and continues to shape life outcomes in the region.
Map 1: Comprehensive Opportunity
Galveston County, TX

Legend

Comprehensive Opportunity Index

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

- River and Lake
- Parks
- Low Population Density

Map 4: Comprehensive Opportunity (Island Area) & Public Housing

Map 5: Public Housing Proximity to High Opportunity
Galveston County, TX

Legend

Public Housing (2008) and Miles to High Opportunity
- 0.00 - 0.25
- 0.26 - 0.50
- 0.51 - 1.00
- 1.01 - 2.00
- 2.01 - 4.53

Comprehensive Opportunity Index
- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

River and Lake
- Parks
- Low Population Density

Map 6: Public Housing Proximity to High Opportunity (Island)

Galveston County, TX


Legend

Public Housing Proximity (2008)

Miles to High Opportunity

- 0.00 - 0.25
- 0.26 - 0.50
- 0.51 - 1.00
- 1.01 - 2.00
- 2.01 - 4.53

Parks

Public Housing 1-Mile Proximity

Legend

Opportunity Index

Very Low

Low

Moderate

High

Very High

River and Lake

Low Population Density

Comprehensive

Legend
Galveston County, TX
