



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
COMMISSIONER DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

January 3, 2024

Dear Mayor Whitmire,

Congratulations on taking office as the new Mayor of Houston! I want you to know that my top priority for the citizens of your great city is to make sure the General Land Office (GLO) provides you all the support you need to successfully close out the remaining Hurricane Harvey programs in Houston. As you know, up until now the GLO has had a strained relationship with Houston. The City Housing and Community Development office has been plagued with a number of problems from the previous administration including a lack of staff, conflicting priorities, and a limited capacity that led to many Houstonians not receiving the help they so desperately needed. As a result, the GLO has had to step in and take on program management in several key areas to ensure timely distribution of critical hurricane recovery funding.

The GLO has a fully dedicated team who work exclusively on the Houston Harvey Recovery. Like we offered your predecessor, I would like to place these professionals in your Houston offices alongside your staff to work toward the conclusion of your Hurricane Harvey efforts. In addition, we have senior and executive level expertise on our team that are also available to embed in your offices to support your executive team as they navigate the world of CDBG-DR requirements and regulations. My staff has a wealth of knowledge, and they stand ready to help wrap up your programs in the most effective and transparent way possible.

To summarize briefly, the City has a total Hurricane Harvey allocation of CDBG-DR housing funding of approximately \$694 million. As of December 1, 2023, there is a little over \$200 million of that amount that has not been spent.

The GLO has completed 1,387 single family homes in the homeowner assistance program after removing the program from the city in late 2020. An additional 739 homes are currently approved and under construction. To date, the GLO has spent over \$331 million on behalf of Houston homeowners in this single program.

There are still numerous other programs under city management that are in various stages of completion with many continuing to flounder. By example, the City has discontinued a program that will require the repayment of \$41 million and the GLO has had to step into another program to complete federally required tenant assistance to over 800 tenants displaced by 3 buyouts of apartment complexes. My staff would be glad to sit down with you and give you a more comprehensive report. There is also approximately \$60 million in funding that has not yet been allocated by the city to any programs. This is concerning as the city's contract expires in February 2025. Once again, I will make sure my staff provides you with all the necessary help to ensure this funding gets out to those who need it most.

Taking the helm of a city the size of Houston is no easy feat, but I promise that I will do everything within my power to ensure that the GLO works hand in hand with Houston to ensure that we can all be proud of the efforts to help Texans recover from hurricanes.

For Texas,

Dawn Buckingham, M.D.
Commissioner, Texas General Land Office