

## Roberts opposes plans to fix Gretna apartments

by Deon Roberts (May 28, 2007)

A Dallas developer wants to buy and repair blighted apartments on the West Bank of Jefferson Parish to solve a post-hurricane affordable housing crisis.

But developer Howard Gyler said Jefferson Parish must force owners of damaged apartments to secure them from further destruction. Otherwise, he said, they become too expensive to rehabilitate. To renovate apartments in Gretna, Gyler paid about \$35,000 a unit. Building a new complex to comply with new flood elevation guidelines could cost \$100,000 a unit, he said.

"Right now many of these properties are at risk of being able to be renovated at all," said Gyler, who is rebuilding the former Riverchase apartments at 200 Holmes Blvd. in Gretna for \$5.6 million.

Parish Councilman Chris Roberts wants rundown complexes bulldozed.

"If they fall into further disrepair, that's only better. That only furthers our ability to get some of these rat holes torn down. I think it's all part of a strategic process," Roberts said. "If I have my prerogative, any of them we can get our hands on to tear down, we're going to. Especially the ones that are blighted and a nuisance."

Roberts is opposed to adding more Section 8 renters on the West Bank.

"Our experience in Jefferson Parish clearly shows that clustered multifamily housing for the most part has not been managed properly, usually leads to blight, has a tremendous effect on school performance scores, crime and economic development," Roberts said.

Instead of letting the private sector repair them, Roberts wants the parish to buy damaged apartments on the West Bank.

"I would prefer some of the multifamily housing units be removed and replaced with green space or another form of housing," he said.



Dallas developer Howard Gyler said Jefferson Parish must force owners of damaged apartments to secure them from further destruction. Otherwise, they become too expensive to rehabilitate. (PHOTO BY DEON ROBERTS)