

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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September 3, 2014

The Honorable Deke Copenhaver
Mayor of Augusta
530 Greene St., Room 806
Augusta, GA 30901
mayordeke@augustaga.gov

Dear Mr. Mayor:

On behalf of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, I write to request prompt action to protect the health and safety of residents of Hyde Park who are trapped by the circumstances of long-standing industrial pollution and an unfulfilled promise of new housing.

As you know, in 1969 the Richmond County Health Department advised residents of Hyde Park that their community was unsafe, contaminated by industrial pollution. Residents were warned by health officials that their well water was unsafe to drink and that food grown in their gardens was unsafe to eat. They were warned to wear gloves, long sleeve shirts and long pants when doing yard work. They were warned that it was unsafe for children to play outside. Why? Industrial pollution had polluted the air, water and soil to such an extent that the community was unlivable.

After much work by residents of the community, the Augusta Brownfields Commission and others concerned with remedying this problem, relocation of all households in the community was finally approved. However, today only half of the 130 families have been moved to safety. Those left behind are living next to the abandoned, demolished and vandalized houses of those who have been moved to safety. Demolition waste is piled high along the roadside. For those left behind, the situation is unfair, dangerous and intolerable; it simply cannot be allowed to continue.

A decade ago, the volunteer Augusta Brownfields Commission worked diligently on behalf of the city to prepare the initial Brownfields grant that was used to assess the contamination caused by Goldberg Brothers' Junk Yard. This led to surface clean-up of the site. A subsequent Brownfields grant was used to assess commercial property adjacent to the Goldberg site and the Hyde Park community. In fact, the Brownfields Commission has an outstanding record of accomplishments in securing funds to improve this city. The city's contaminated and blighted areas are an untapped resource that could be used to ease the city's financial crunch by providing jobs and economic growth to our city. However, today the project is stalled.

Mayor Copenhaver, the residents Hyde Park seek only justice and fulfillment of promises made. We are appealing to you to use the power of your office to protect public health and safety. We started this project, let's finish it.

Respectfully,



Charles N. Utley, EJ Campaign Director