



CITY OF JERSEY VILLAGE, TEXAS

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MAYOR'S NOVEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

The Truth about Subsidence

A couple of newspapers have recently had articles about the problems of subsidence in Jersey Village. The articles were based on some facts, but those facts were misused to sensationalize the piece; one stated that Jersey Village is sinking 2 inches per year. I want to share the facts that the Harris Galveston Subsidence District (HGSD) has given me -- the same facts that are available on their website: <http://www.hgsubsidence.org>. This is an excellent website to fully explain the problem and the solution to subsidence.

The Texas Gulf Coast was formed with clay and sandy soil in such a way that subsidence is certain to happen. Subsidence is directly related to the pumping of ground water which wasn't a problem many years ago when the demand for water was low. As the population of Harris County exploded over the last several decades, more and more water was pumped from the ground, accelerating subsidence during that time. The worst of the subsidence was about 1 foot in five years from 1995 to 2000 and, although it was centered near Jersey Village, it occurred in all of Northwest Harris County.

The subsidence problem was finally recognized by the Texas legislature and the Subsidence District was formed in 1975 to address this issue. In 1999 HGSD adopted regulations to reduce the volume of water being pumping by 30% by 2010, 70% by 2020 and 80% in 2030. The Texas legislature also created water authorities to allow MUDs and cities to combine efforts in order to allow all users to slowly get off of ground water and replace it with surface water. The increased population in our area during this time continued to contribute to the problem as the demand for water increased significantly.

Jersey Village slowed the pumping of water from our pumps significantly in 2001 when we began buying water from the City of Houston. The City of Houston continued to pump ground water from nearby wells, however, until the Northwest Water Authority was connected to surface water in the last several years. Since that time, the City of Houston has reduced the pumping of water from nearby wells over 82%. The goal of reducing groundwater pumping by 30% in 2010 was achieved and the goals in 2020 and 2030 are on schedule.

The reduction in pumping groundwater has been very beneficial in slowing subsidence in our immediate area. The rate of subsidence has been reduced significantly over the last few years. As less water is pumped out of the ground the earth tends to retain its elevation to sea level. The subsidence is expected to slow more significantly to a virtual stop as the pumps from other MUDs are slowed to meet the 70% reduction standard.

The bottom line is that Jersey Village is not sinking into the Gulf. The subsidence will stabilize over the next few years and your property values will hold stable. Do not be misled by random newspaper articles trying to scare people. I would encourage you to check out the information on the Galveston Subsidence District website.



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NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

November 15, 2010 – 6:00 TO 7:00 P.M.

Civic Center, 16327 Lakeview, Jersey Village, Texas

In June of 2007, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) adjusted the boundaries for the 100-year floodplain within Jersey Village. As a result of FEMA's changes to the floodplain boundary, most new homes built within Jersey Village must be built at a higher slab elevation than prior to the changes. For some newly constructed homes, this has required the placement of fill material two to three feet above finish grade.

Earlier this year, city council hired the engineer firm of Claunch and Miller to advise the city regarding slab elevation requirements. Claunch and Miller is currently engaged in the process of reviewing existing city ordinances and developing recommendations to alleviate any problems the new FEMA requirements may cause.

The Consultants will conduct a public workshop in order to obtain background information on what specific ordinance changes are needed, to present general drainage concepts, and to receive input from interested parties. The workshop will be limited to a discussion of drainage requirements as they pertain to the construction of new homes only. The consultant has not been engaged to evaluate community flooding in general, or to recommend future capital projects.

The workshop regarding slab elevation and lot drainage will be conducted on November 15, 2010 from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Civic Center, 16327, Lakeview Drive, Jersey Village, Texas.

We are looking forward to your input!