

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

Homebuilding Plan for Treme/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier

Date Wednesday, September 12, 2007
 Ujima Building, 1019 N. Prieur

Next Meeting Wednesday, October 10, 2007
 Ujima Building, 1019 N. Prieur
 6:00 – 8:00 pm (dinner to be provided)

Participants

Lloyd Bell	Lois Foley	Sherri Lawson	David Rayford
Mary Bondy (for Jessie Osborne)	Jennie Gorden	Travis Leblanc	James Redman
Denise Bryant	Elizabeth Green	Jacqueline Lotts	Sylvia Redmond
Doretha Bryant	Sheila Green	Cynthia Magraff	Elaine H. Reed
Parmeletta Carlo	Leah Green	Alonzrine Martin	Rochelle Roberts
Joan Coycautt	Yelta Harper	Daniel Mathieu	Maxine Stewart
Dariel Celestin	Diane Harris	(PICO)	Joni Washington
Sheila Condoll	Karen Herbert	Sarah McMorris	
Mrs and Mr Sidney	Patricia Herbert	Marcello (NOLAC)	
Daufauchard	Sheila Johnson	Emelda Paul	
	Edwina Joseph	Gail Pierre	

HANO: Dwayne Muhammad, Kathy Haynes
Case Management: Carolyn Carter, Caroline Gammill (New Orleans), Diane Pitts, Charlotte Glover (Baton Rouge)
Providence/Enterprise: Tammy Crumpton, Krystle Gibson, Jim Kelly, Matt Morrin, Nicole Swerhun

This meeting record was drafted by Nicole Swerhun, community development and facilitation consultant to Providence. Prior to being finalized, it was provided in draft to all meeting participants for their review. It reflects the key messages and main points raised at the meeting. It is not intended to represent a verbatim transcript.

I. Meeting Overview

Lafitte residents opened and chaired the meeting. Lafitte Resident Council President Emelda Paul opened with a prayer, and indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to give residents an opportunity to get answers to their questions. She said that residents have been hearing a lot of hearsay, and that's not good. She also said that the meeting is a chance to make sure HANO is informed and residents can discuss what's good and not good for the tenants of Lafitte. Lafitte residents have all been through a lot and really want to come back home. She also said that residents want to form a relationship with HANO.

Miss Paul then introduced Lafitte resident Patricia Herbert who provided the following overview points:

1. Since October 2006 Residents of Lafitte have met with Providence/Enterprise to review the Lafitte/Treme/Tulane/Gravier Home Rebuilding Plan. We participated in three community meetings (including a meeting in Houston) to give feedback on the designs of the homes; which homes we liked, which homes we didn't like.

2. Every 2nd Wednesday of the month we participate in the Residents Advisory meeting and get an update from Providence/Enterprise on the status of the Lafitte (demolishing, temporary housing & case management services).
3. We are also working with PICO LIFT to receive training to assist us in reaching out to and organizing residents so that we could be informed and be included in the decision making process. We organize to develop leadership skills so our own voice can be heard.
4. We are organizing to create a working relationship with HUD/HANO.
5. After this meeting, we will continue to contact residents so we could have more people involved in organizing to help make decisions, because as residents of Lafitte we need to be more active in this process.

Lafitte resident Alonzrine Martin then posed the first of eight questions to Dwayne Muhammad, Director of Management for HANO. The questions had been raised by participants during previous meetings, and had been forwarded to HANO in advance of the meeting.

Before answering the first question, Dwayne asked Emelda, Meeting Chair, for permission to make an opening statement. Having received permission from Emelda and other participants, Dwayne's opening statement included the following points:

- Dwayne introduced himself as the Director of Management for HANO. He asked residents to pardon the fact that he was smiling a bit, because he thought the meeting was a very very beautiful sight.
- He explained that he took over as Director of Management in April of this year, and that immediately activities at Lafitte took precedence in his job. He said he'd met with representatives of Providence over the last month or so to make sure there are no gaps in communication between the organizations.
- He said that HANO is in the business of housing – and contrary to media reports and innuendo and suspicion, there is no grand conspiracy to keep residents from returning to the city. He also said that HANO is absolutely committed, as residents see fit, to having as open a dialogue as necessary to rebuild Lafitte. He said that rebuilding can't happen without a relationship between HANO and Lafitte residents.

Dwayne thanked Miss Paul for giving him the chance to make the statement, and then answered the residents questions, as read by Alonzrine.

II. Questions from Residents, Answers from HANO

1. QUESTION FROM RESIDENTS (read by Alonzrine Martin)

How much of Lafitte will be repaired? When will the repairs start? When will they be completed?

ANSWER FROM HANO (provided by Dwayne Muhammad)

196 units will be repaired (all the units in the buildings between Claiborne and North Roman). HANO started trashing units in the first 8 or so buildings this week. The Director of Modernization confirmed with me at the end of the day today that repairs will take about eight months to complete. A week from today we will know who will receive the contract to do the repairs to the buildings. HANO has received three proposals from contractors, and one of these three will be awarded the work.

2. QUESTION FROM RESIDENTS (read by Alonzrine Martin)

Some residents would like to help repair Lafitte, and particularly their own unit. Is HUD/HANO open to hiring former Lafitte residents to help with repairs?

ANSWER FROM HANO (provided by Dwayne Muhammad)

Yes. Contractors that want to do work for HANO are required to explain how residents will be involved in their work. HANO is bound by law to ensure that any contractor that's hired by HANO employs residents (this is called Section 3 employment). Mary Alexander at HANO has been a stickler for this. That being said, people must have certain qualifications before contractors will hire them. When we know more details, we will communicate them to you all.

3. QUESTION FROM RESIDENTS (read by Alonzrine Martin)

Why has it taken so long to repair Lafitte?

ANSWER FROM HANO (provided by Dwayne Muhammad)

After Katrina all developments were closed. HUD presented a reoccupancy plan for Iberville, BW Cooper, and Guste. Lafitte was not one of the developments that was part of the reoccupancy plan. After Providence-Enterprise came on board, along with Lafitte residents and other community stakeholders, together they pushed for the reopening of some of Lafitte. I don't know why Lafitte wasn't originally part of HUD's reoccupancy plan.

4. QUESTION FROM RESIDENTS (read by Alonzrine Martin)

It has been announced that DVP Vouchers will expire in June 2008. What will happen after they expire? Will Section 8 be offered to DVP recipients?

ANSWER FROM HANO (provided by Dwayne Muhammad)

HUD hasn't given us any indication that there will be an extension of the DVP. As you all know, HANO is in litigation because of the lawsuit filed by some residents. HANO has submitted a demolition application to HUD, but because of the lawsuit we can't move forward. If HUD allows us to demolish, each Head of Household at Lafitte will be able to access a Tenant Protection Voucher. This Voucher protects your housing subsidy while the new development is being built. After the new development is built, you can then either move back to the development or the Tenant Protection Voucher will turn into a Section 8 Voucher and you can stay where you are. I have 5100 clients that are affected by this. We are pushing HUD every single day to tell us how we'll move forward post June 2008. But the important point is that there are provisions in place, pending resolution of the lawsuit, to protect tenants beyond June 2008 with a Tenant Protection Voucher.

5. QUESTION FROM RESIDENTS (read by Alonzrine Martin)

When is demolition of Lafitte planned to begin?

ANSWER FROM HANO (provided by Dwayne Muhammad)

The reason why I mentioned the lawsuit is because those are issues that have to be settled before we can develop timelines for the redevelopment of Lafitte. That's why I can't tell you when demolition and then construction will start because so many other factors are out there that influence when we move forward. The good thing is that everything we've heard from the HANO Receiver Team is that they are absolutely committed to improving the overall community. We want you to come home, but to something we can all be proud of and to a place we can take pride raising our children in. That's the priority of the Receivership. We're working hard to ensure that the litigation is settled.

6. QUESTION FROM RESIDENTS (read by Alonzrine Martin)

Why did HUD/HANO decide to demolish Lafitte? Many residents have indicated that their units, especially those on the second and third floor, were not damaged.

ANSWER FROM HANO (provided by Dwayne Muhammad)

This was answered in the response to Question 3 (Dwayne said that he doesn't know why Lafitte wasn't originally part of HUD's reoccupancy plan.)

7. QUESTION FROM RESIDENTS (read by Alonzrine Martin)

What will happen to my Voucher after my unit has been demolished?

ANSWER FROM HANO (provided by Dwayne Muhammad)

The way the regulations are written (HUD notice 2007), if you're offered your pre-disaster unit while you are in the DVP and you do not return, then you will lose your subsidy once the DVP ends. That doesn't affect any of you because your units were never offered to you. If we do move with demolition of Lafitte, that would mean your DVP voucher would be replaced by a Tenant Protection Voucher. That's will provide you with longer term assistance that would be provided until the demolition and redevelopment of Lafitte is complete. But the Tenant Protection Voucher program doesn't kick in till we know we're moving forward with demolition.

8. QUESTION FROM RESIDENTS (read by Alonzrine Martin)

HUD/HANO wrote to Providence and Enterprise and said that "Lafitte residents who are offered an alternative unit at the Iberville development, are not required to accept the alternative unit. They can remain on their assistance program without revocation of that assistance." And yet recent communication from HUD/HANO says that residents could end up in a lottery for housing, if/when the housing voucher program(s) expire. Does that mean that if a former Lafitte resident turns down, for example, an Iberville unit that they could end up without housing?

ANSWER FROM HANO (provided by Dwayne Muhammad)

I'm very familiar with the letter you're talking about because I wrote it. HUD notice 2007-3 required HANO to send notification to all public housing residents, letting you know that we had units available. And every day I'm pushing my staff to reoccupy our empty units. In terms of Iberville, because you weren't Iberville tenants before the storm, Lafitte residents could turn down the offer to live in Iberville and not lose your assistance. However it is true that once the DVP runs out there will be a limited number of units of public housing available, and they will be offered on a first-come-first-served bases.

There were 5,146 families living in public housing at the time of the disaster, and we're looking at about 3,000 units coming back online. If June 2008 comes and we've occupied every unit in our inventory (all 196 repaired units at Lafitte are occupied, Iberville is occupied, the scattered sites are occupied), and DVP ends and HUD doesn't extend it, then the answer is yes, there may be up to 2,146 families without the ability to reoccupy units and who no longer have assistance. We sent a letter on June 1st of this year to all residents explaining this, and then the letter was sent again on June 15th through certified mail to make sure it was received. Hopefully we will not end up in the situation where people are left without housing, but I can't speak to HUD policy. I didn't have any other choice but to be as honest with you as possible. If things change, then we'll draft another letter and let you know.

In addition to the 8 questions listed above, additional questions were raised by participants at the meeting. They are listed here along with Dwayne's responses:

9. **QUESTION:** I was not living in any project before Katrina, but I was on Section 8. I have problems with my housing situation and need someone from the Section 8 office to assist me. **ANSWER:** Before I leave here give me your information and I'll take it to the Section 8 office and someone will contact you
10. **QUESTION:** You said 196 units would be repaired, but we have more than 196 households that were living at Lafitte. How are you going to decide who goes into the repaired units? **ANSWER:** I would encourage as many of you as possible to read the HUD Reoccupancy Notice. It's 23 pages, but there are 4 pages that focus on how we have to, by law, reoccupy units. When the repaired units become available at Lafitte, we are obligated to offer that unit first to the household that occupied it before Katrina. If that client says they're not coming back, for whatever reason, we will send them a letter asking them to confirm they're declining to reoccupy. Then we'll move to the next tier of Lafitte residents to reoccupy those units.
11. **QUESTION:** What if you lived in a Lafitte building that was destroyed by the rain of Katrina and is very damaged. Some apartments have holes where you can look up and see the sky – the ceilings are coming down, walls are cracking. I have termite nests all over my apartment. It may take a little longer to repair badly damaged apartments. What if they can't be repaired in the time you gave us for the repairs (8 months). **ANSWER:** We have had, as an agency, almost 24 months to assess the damage at Lafitte. The 8 month timetable takes into account those damages and you all should hold us to the 8 months.
12. **QUESTION:** I'm on a voucher right now. If a unit becomes available and I sign and say I don't want to come back, will I be penalized? **ANSWER:** If your predisaster unit becomes available, and we offer that to you and you don't take it, when DVP ends you will not be assisted. This is a regulatory issue. It's not a policy that the Housing Authority of New Orleans decided to implement. Unless something changes from a regulatory standpoint, if you don't take back your pre-disaster unit, once DVP ends you will be unassisted.
13. **QUESTION:** Where I stayed at Lafitte there are 14 steps. Right now I can't go up and down those steps. Do I have to take that same apartment if its offered to me? **ANSWER:** My staff and I met on Monday of this week for two and a half hours about this. We're going to make every reasonable accommodation not only for people who have health issues, but we also realize that in the last two years there have been changes to family composition. We have decided that we will over house families but we will not under house. Larger families may be offered a unit from our scattered site inventory. Our goal is to put Lafitte families in an environment you can be proud of.
14. **QUESTION:** You said they're going to start with repairing 18 buildings. Once that's done, are you going to repair the rest of the Lafitte buildings? Or are you only repairing buildings between Claiborne and North Roman? **ANSWER:** We are only repairing the 18 buildings between Claiborne and North Roman. The rest of the buildings at Lafitte will be demolished, and the repaired units will also eventually be redeveloped. The details on timing are being worked out in the redevelopment and management agreements with Providence and Enterprise. I understand that

demolition will begin at the back of the development, and the people living in the repaired units will be the first to move into the new units. Our overall goal is to redevelop the neighbourhood and create an environment that you and your children, and we as an agency, and the city and our partners Providence and Enterprise can all be proud of. We recognize your desire to be there, but you need to recognize our desire to place you in a better environment.

15. **QUESTION:** Once you reoccupy from Claiborne to Roman, do we have to move to other end of property? Or can we move back to the Claiborne side? I don't want to have to move to another part of the site. **ANSWER:** That is something that Providence and Enterprise could answer. But if I had to guess, I don't think they'd move you to a brand new unit at one end of the property and then, when units are available on the other side, there would be another mass relocation of people to other new units.
16. **QUESTION:** I know they started Monday with gutting units. I know we were told that we had to remove our stuff. Some of us could not remove all of our stuff at that particular time. Now you have people removing other people's stuff and selling it. Why can't HANO have security to watch this? It's bad enough that we were locked out. **ANSWER:** Your assessment is a fair assessment of the situation. Let me provide some balance. The vast majority of Laffite residents received relocation assistance about a year and a half ago. When you received that assistance there was a form you completed that authorized HANO to dispose of what was in your unit. Then HANO set up procedures to let you back into your unit to retrieve what's in your unit. Then we sent another notification in May that said we'd be disposing of the materials in your unit because we were attempting to reoccupy. Yesterday I got some phone calls that described what Miss Paul said happened. Immediately (yesterday), we brought in both the resident contractors doing the trashing, and had very focused conversations with them about how to trash those units. We also talked to HANO's Chief of Security who was at a conference in Dallas about how to prevent the theft. We also instructed the contractors that if they're trashing a unit and a client shows up and provides documentation that that's their unit, anything they want to take they can take. We need to balance that picture because the process is already underway. There will be security present to make sure those things don't take place again. If it continues we told the resident contractors that we will immediately terminate their contracts. We can't reoccupy the site if that stuff is still there. We're talking two years guys – if what was in your unit was that important you would have got the stuff out of there. I know that better processes could have been in place and I apologize, but we have put mechanisms in place to prevent it from happening again.
17. **COMMENT:** You said you sent a letter on June 1st? I'm pretty sure many people didn't get those letters.
18. **QUESTION:** My relative was removed from a lease and we'd like to put her back on. We're having problems getting it done. **ANSWER:** If she has been officially removed from the lease, its not as simple as going back and adding her. She's going to have to get justification from her physician that she can't live in a unit by herself. **RESPONSE:** They told her it was too late for that. **ANSWER:** Get the documentation and give it to her case worker. If you can't get an answer, ask to talk to a manager.

19. **COMMENT:** After Katrina, when we were able to come back home, we went to the office in our development and were given these papers to fill out. I can't speak for everybody, but I was under the impression that the reason why we were filling out those papers was because they said we had to remove our belongings and that HANO didn't have to be responsible for anything you don't move out of our apartments and put in storage. Then later they told me to put everything in the middle of the floor. I was under the impression I'd be able to go back to my apartment, and the next thing I hear on the news is that the four developments would be demolished.
20. **STATEMENT:** You said your contractors were ordered to watch their staff so they didn't steal any tenants property as of today. I live at 1813 Lafitte Street. I've been at my apartment for the last two days sorting through stuff I want to take out. After the supervisors left today, two trucks came back to the site. One of them had a big screen television stashed between porches. He put it in small red pick up truck and he left and went toward Claiborne street. **RESPONSE:** I made it clear to the contractor that if any statements can be validated we're going to charge them and their company with theft. We have some things I can't talk about openly about, but we are monitoring. Let's just say that there are some people on site who look like they're doing one thing and they're actually doing another. We may be able to pull license plate information.
21. **QUESTION:** The new units you'll build, on a scale of 1 to 10, will they stand up to Katrina like Lafitte did? **ANSWER:** I can't speak to the construction level of the new units. I'll speak to modernization people who are working with Providence and Enterprise to find out. I don't know the answer.
22. **QUESTION:** On Monday I was going to my unit to get pictures and papers out of there. I met a man that had been into my apartment and was taking the washing machine and dryer. They had U-Hauls and everything. I'm a legal witness. They were taking people's stuff out of there. **ANSWER:** I apologize on behalf of the Agency for not having mechanisms in place, but we have them in place now to prevent it from continuing.
23. **QUESTION:** What happens if in 8 months the repair is complete and we have to come home, but we're still in a lease? **ANSWER:** We have staff that work on this. HANO offers landlords up to \$1500 as an incentive to break the lease. We also made landlords in New Orleans aware that we'd begin the process of getting early releases on leases. If you are moving from Section 8 housing in New Orleans, there are supports available for you. This is all done through our relocation staff.

Ms Emelda closed this part of the meeting by thanking Dwayne for taking the time out of his busy schedule to answer the residents' questions. She asked participants "Are you satisfied with what you heard?" And many participants responded by saying yes. There was then a thirty minute break for dinner.

III. Updates from Providence

After dinner, Jim Kelly provided the following updates from Providence Community Housing:

- Providence is doing a lot of work to bring non-housing services to the Treme community. Meetings are being held with organizations like Total Community Action, the Urban League, Catholic Charities, the Daughters of Charity, the YMCA and the AFL CIO to bring services such as a Head Start Center, health facilities, literacy programs, child care, employment, financial literacy, and whatever other programs or services residents say are needed.
- Providence is also exploring options on how to use the land adjacent to Sojourner Truth Community Center. No decisions have been made, however we're considering moving the playground that's beside the Community Center more into the center of the site, and adding another playground so that one would be located north of Galvez, and another playground would be located south of Galvez. We are talking to Freddie Mac (a big financial institution) about this idea, and they've expressed an interest in supporting it. If we moved forward with this idea, then it would also create an opportunity to build model housing next to Sojourner Truth. We think this is important because it will give Lafitte residents and others a chance to see the kind of housing that will be built to replace Lafitte. These homes would likely be sold for home ownership. *Support was expressed for more than one playground, and no objections were raised about the idea of building homes adjacent to Sojourner Truth..*
- If we move the playground, one thought we have is to start putting homes beside Sojourner Truth. These would be homes for sale, and might include some duplexes and singles. We're working hard to provide home ownership opportunities in Treme.
- There is a HUD policy that's been discussed tonight that I think needs to be revisited – the policy that says if that if you lived in one of the 196 units that are being repaired at Lafitte, and that unit is offered to you and you say you don't want it, then you're no longer completely protected. Providence and Enterprise are going to see what we can do to revise this policy and make sure everyone is protected. Last year we were successful in helping extend the deadline of DVP, so I hope we will be successful again.

Any questions?

1. **QUESTION:** When you all build housing, are the room sizes going to be bigger? **ANSWER:** Yes, generally about 1/3 size bigger.
2. **QUESTION:** There are 900 units at Lafitte now. Are you going to build 900 units back? **ANSWER:** Yes we will replace all 900 units. About half of them will be on the current site, and about half will be in the area around Lafitte.
3. **QUESTION:** How strong will those buildings be? **ANSWER:** The concrete and brick buildings will be replaced with steel framing. These are steel frames not wood frames.

4. **QUESTION:** Will we have each individual property closed in? I don't want to see it like the new Fischer development. Some of us want our own yards. **COMMENT:** Some of us would like a clothes line. **ANSWER:** We're not that detailed in our planning yet. *Note added after the meeting: Having individual yards and fences, as well as porches, has been expressed by Lafitte residents right from the beginning of the Homebuilding Planning process. Providence and Enterprise are committed to working with residents to see what we can do to make this happen..*
5. **QUESTION:** Once the new units are built, Providence and Enterprise are going to take over. Will the rent be whatever we paid before? And for how long? I'm worried you can raise the rent to whatever you'd like. **ANSWER:** They are public housing units and there are regulatory agreements we need to sign that control rents. Your rent will be 30%.
6. **QUESTION:** When we came back from the storm, I noticed that you (Providence and Enterprise) were already here. Did you purchase the land Lafitte is on? **ANSWER:** No, we don't own the land. We may have a long term lease in the future.
7. **QUESTION:** Will Providence and Enterprise do management and development of the new units at Lafitte? **ANSWER:** Yes, we will do the development of the new units at Lafitte. *Note added after the meeting: And we expect to hire a professional property management firm to manage the units.*
8. **QUESTION:** What about utilities? **ANSWER:** Yes, you will have to pay utilities.

Tammy Crumpton, Director of Resident Services for Providence, then handed out Community Fair t-shirts to the first five participants that signed their name on the sign in sheet at the meeting. She also thanked participants for coming.

IV. Next Meeting

Lafitte residents meet on the second Wednesday of every month. **The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 10, 2007.** The next meeting will start right on time at 6:00 pm, and last until 8:00 pm. Dinner will be served.

A Draft Record of Discussion from this meeting will be given to all participants for review before the notes are finalized.