

DRAFT RECORD OF DISCUSSION

Homebuilding Plan for Treme/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier

Date Wednesday, March 12, 2008
St. Peter Claver School Cafeteria, 1020 N. Prieur

Next Meeting Wednesday, April 9, 2008
St. Peter Claver School Cafeteria, 1020 N. Prieur
6:00 – 8:00 pm (dinner to be provided)

Participants

Jessica Anderson
Alvin Banks
Lloyd E. Bell
Doretha Bryant
Trenise Bryant
Audrey Burts
Frances Burnett
Pat Carter
Terry Carter
Dariel Celestin
Mr. Sidney Daufauchard
Mrs. Sidney Daufauchard
Daffney Davis
Maisha Duplessis
Russell Fraise
Roderick Franklin (NOPD)
Regina Guichorel

Karen Hebert
Dorothy Hills
Clyde Hudson
Vestina Jeanmarie
Alice C. Jones
Beverly Jones
Norvin Jones
Sherri Lawson
Waltell Jordan
Julene Lloyd
Cynthia Magraff
Sarah Marcello (NOLAC)
Daniel Mathieu (Micah Project)
Rozell McKay
Donna Molett
Cherlynn Mouri
Janelle Par

Emelda Paul
Anthony Pendelton
Sharon Pieret
Gail Pierre
Christina Quezergue
Antoinette Rickmon
Lachia Rodriguez
Gale Sanders
Eddie Scott
Maxine Stewart
Carol Thomas
Evelyn Wallace
Joni Washington
Mary J. Watson
Gertis Wiltz
Shortell Windham

HANO: Tracy Mercadel, Dwayne Muhammed
Case Management: Carol Carter (New Orleans), Dianne Pitts, Cheryl Glover
Providence/Enterprise: Jim Kelly, Tammy Crumpton, Matt Morrin, LaTonya Williams, Caroline Gammill

This meeting record was drafted by Caroline Gammill, staff of Providence, and reviewed by Nicole Swerhun, community development and facilitation consultant to Providence. Prior to being finalized, it will be 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. HANO Update

Dwayne Muhammed, the Director of Section 8 at HANO, opened the meeting by providing the following updates:

- **Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPV)** – Mr. Muhammed acknowledged that there had been many questions about the TPV program in other localities that posed some problems for clients trying access the TPV. As a result, a letter has been sent to other Housing Authorities requesting that they notify tenants of the availability of TPV and provide more information about the program. All residents who are living in New Orleans are under no obligation to switch over to TPV; it will be done automatically.
- **Rent Adjustments** – Mr. Muhammed also shared that his staff is developing an informational Q&A about what to do if a tenant's rent is adjusted and the tenant doesn't think

it is accurate. If tenants have not come into the HANO office for an annual assessment and they receive a letter notifying them of a drastic increase in rent, tenants have the right to request a hearing. If a tenant contests this rent increase, HANO staff will meet with the tenant to explain how the rent amount was determined. Rent will be based on 30% annual gross income and there are many deductions that the process takes into account (number of children, etc.). The office is working diligently to smooth out bumps in the process.

Questions and Discussion

1. **Is the DVP portable?** *Yes, residents are still eligible for assistance and for the DVP.*
2. **I have a client who moved from South Carolina to Baton Rouge and the Housing Authority said it would take three months for her voucher to transfer. Is that so?** *Portability is an issue that our office continues to address.*
3. **What happens if a client is living in a unit where the landlord is charging less than the voucher is worth?** *HANO will pay her rent minus 30% of her adjusted gross income. This often happens when a landlord owns a double and is charging different rates for the open market and for Section 8. Prior to the storm, HANO had a policy of 'rent reasonableness' and these requirements were waived after the storm. The rent market will level off and there will be a better situation for tenants. In the mean time, our office is working to address these inconsistencies.*
4. **Why is there a need for a resident credit check?** *When clients claim \$0 income, we use credit checks to see if Verizon and Cox have accounts in that name. It is a better way to manage tax payer money; we need every client to pay 30% so that we are able to assist other families. We only run a credit check when folks enter the program and/ or if you come back and claim zero income hardship.*

Tracy Mercadel, the Director of Management, provided the following updates:

- **Repairs to Units at Lafitte** – There are currently three contractors working at the site. Theft remains a major problem: copper vents have been stolen and rain has damaged work that has already been done. The first units should be coming on-line next month, with more to follow after that. On Monday, letters went out to the 94 families whose units are being renovated. They will have the choice to return to their former unit or use the TPV. March 28 is the deadline for these families to notify HANO that they are coming back: residents must sign the letter and return it to 4100 Touro St. Diane Comier will be the site manager for Lafitte. Her number is 529 – 1592.
- **Re-Occupancy Criteria** – The renovated units are first being offered to the pre-Katrina residents and once HANO knows who is interested in coming back, they will send out a mailing to former all former Lafitte residents about the availability of the remaining units. HANO will hold a lottery to determine who will occupy the bedroom sizes that are available. It is important to remember that this will be a construction site and residents will be expected to move out by January 31, 2009, at the latest, as construction continues. Residents who move into renovated units may not have first preference for the first newly constructed units. HANO will provide assistance to relocate out of the renovated units – but not assistance to move in if you live in New Orleans.
- **Relocation Assistance** – (Tammy Crumpton) Summaries of the HANO survey report will be at the next meeting. In the survey, 70% of residents said that they do not want to move back to public housing.
- **Demolition** - The city has not yet issued the demolition permits for Lafitte.

II. Resident Update

Daniel Mathieu (Micah Project) offered the following updates on the progress residents have made with the Bill of Rights.

- **Tenant Bill of Rights and Community Center** – The Bill of Rights is coming along; there remain specific questions to be answered. Meeting minutes from previous meetings are available. This group has met with NOLAC and is trying to set up meetings with Fair Housing; these meetings are part of information gathering. The group wants to share with residents what the rights of tenants are.
- **Re-occupancy of New Units at Lafitte** – It is proposed that former Lafitte residents will have first preference to move back and among them it will be: first seniors, followed by seniors with disabilities, people with disabilities, single mothers, families, couples and then others. Feedback is welcome on this plan, it is not final.
- **Gail Simmons, comments and update:** With the Bill of Rights, we are trying to establish what are rights are as residents. Through talks with NOLAC, we're determining what legs we have to stand on, what we are able to have a say in and what we can do to move forward. We're also looking for more feedback. The age limit for seniors is 55 – 62 and families are defined as 2 or more.
- **Alvin Banks, comments and update:** These meetings have had a few residents present, ALL residents have been invited and are welcome. The group is getting down to business and it is important to know our rights and to take this opportunity to get involved at the beginning and not let others handle it for us. We're also brainstorming ways to get more people involved and informed, including possibly radio ads in addition to newsletters.
- **Matt Morrin (Enterprise), clarification on credit score request:** When Enterprise asks to run a credit check, it is not because we care what your score is, the check is to make sure that the resident does not have outstanding bills. We are concerned when people have large outstanding bills with Entergy or the gas company because then it will be difficult for them to get service in these new units. It isn't necessary to improve your credit score to be eligible for the new units, but significant outstanding utility bills could make you inelligible.
- **Tammy Crumpton (Providence):** If you are interested in Homeownership, speak with your case manager about improving your credit score. A HANO voucher can be used to build towards owning your home. The program respects your confidentiality and privacy: we won't know your credit score, we will only know if you 'qualify' or 'don't qualify.'
- **Carol Cater (Catholic Charities):** Catholic Charities is offering and paying for credit counseling sessions and financial fitness sessions. Please call us to schedule these.
- **Sarah McMorris Marcello (NOLAC):** To offer some legal guidance about the re-occupancy priorities, I wanted to share this: you may have to broaden the 'single mothers' provision to 'single parents' so that it is in line with fair housing regulations. A credit check for tenants is allowed for under law; however, as tenants, if you have a good rental history, you have the right to say "I have other problems with my credit that I am working on and trying to change, but I have a good rental history and that should trump the other problems with my credit" in your discussions with the housing authority.

III. Community Safety Update

- The community safety update included an introduction of the new Commander of the Detective Unit, Chris Cambiotti, and Lt Sergeant DuPris. The police of the 1st district will be responsible for Lafitte. The situation will be similar to that at Iberville. The NOPD has listened to resident concerns about the area and are planning to deploy police.

IV. Providence / Enterprise Update

Matt Morrin shared the following updates with the group:

- **Zoning Application (building plans that must be submitted to the city)** – The zoning application will be presented to the City Planning Commission on April 22. All residents are encouraged to come and see the presentation; it will most likely be in the City Council chambers. More details will be at next month's meeting.
- **Architects** – Providence / Enterprise are finalizing the negotiations with the architecture team to finish the plans. We will ask the architects who are leading the planning process to come to a future meeting.

Questions and Discussion

1. **The design is great; my concern is the materials to be used. Our homes had bricks and mortar, what are your plans for materials?** *We are not planning to use bricks. We are being held to a high standard on construction – not only are we required to, but we want to as well. Standards to build a new building in New Orleans are high and are meant to stand up to a strong hurricane: they include both with wind standards and base flood elevations. We will be using materials that look like Tremé, either wood or 'hardy boy' or 'hardy plank' that looks like wood.*
2. **What will the interiors be like?** *It is an open question. In our experience, people have wanted carpet, but New Orleans is different. Not all residents want carpet. It is in our best interest to use high-quality, durable materials.*
3. **Why aren't units all the way to N. Roman being reopened?** *It is a HANO Decision and the second block will be reopened if HANO determines there is sufficient need or interest.*

Tracey Mercadel: *A decision has not been made about the second set of 10 buildings. The final survey results have come in and are being digested by HUD; the direction will come from them.*

Tammy Crumpton: *Only 94 units are being reopened, those that are bound my Lafitte St., Orleans Ave., Derbigny St., and Claiborne Ave. It is possible that the second block will come back.*

A former resident shared information about a meeting at Our Lady of Good Council where folks will be working to re-open all buildings.

4. **If you were the lease holder Pre-Katrina, you have the right to return?** *HANO is working with the head of household.*

V. Adjournment

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 9, 6 pm

Bill of Rights Meeting: Monday, March 31 at 5:30 pm in St. Edmunds Room, 1910 N. Prieur St

Dinner and Raffle