

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

Homebuilding Plan for Treme/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier

Date Wednesday, October 8, 2008
St. Peter Claver School Cafeteria, 1020 N. Prieur

Next Meeting Wednesday, November 12, 2008
St. Peter Claver School Cafeteria, 1020 N. Prieur
6:00 – 8:00 pm (dinner to be provided)

Participants

Gale Sanders	Latasha Lowe	Renell Ceazer
Lachia Rodriguez	Ruby Regis	Ryan Franklin
Vastine Jeanmarie	Alice Jones	Norvin Jones
Emelda Paul	Bertha Lively	Angelina Dorsey
Parreletta Carter	Bernice King	Cynthia Magraff
Anthony Pendleton	Evelyn Wallace	Claudia Jones
Joni Washington	Rochelle Roberts	Alvin Banks
Sidney Daufauchard	Shirley Daufauchard	Patricia Claiborne
Clyde Hudson	Sonia Morgan	Carol Thomas
Dorothy Hill	Kyndria Claiborne	Antoinette Rickmon
Mary Johnson	Ann Lee	Donna Martin
George Arceneaux	Debbie Griffin	Janice Sandifer
Shirley Waters	Lloyd Thiel	Vivian Delaney
Christina Quezergue	Daffney Davis	Terry Carter
Charmaine Williams	Gertis Wiltz	Sharon Hamilton
Beverly Valderly	Dennis Martin	Shanderia Martin

Daniel Mathieu, The Micah Project
Sarah McMorris, NOLAC
Officer Franklin

HANO: Tracy Mercadel, Dwayne Muhammed, Valerie Brown (consultant to HANO)
Case Management: Carol Carter (New Orleans), Dianne Pitts (Baton Rouge)
Providence/Enterprise: Tammy Crumpton, Jim Kelly, Matt Morrin, Andreanecia Morris, Brenda Richard-Montgomery, LaTonya Williams, Caroline Gammill

This meeting record was drafted by Caroline Gammill, staff at 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.

The meeting began with an opening prayer offered by Mr. Alvin Banks, a review of the agenda by Tammy Crumpton, Director of Resident Services for Providence and a note that the Public Comment Period for the School Facilities Master Plan closes on October 17.

I. School Facilities Master Plan

Constance Caruso, Director of Planning, Recovery School District shared the following information:

- **Public Comment Period:** The public comment period for the Schools Facilities Master Plan is on-going and will continue until October 17. It is important to

remember that the plan has not yet been adopted and that the comments received will make a difference. Comments can be submitted by email, by fax or in person. After the comment period closes, the Superintendents of the Orleans Parish Schools, Recovery School District and the State will review the comments, make appropriate changes to the plan, and pass recommendations along to the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The OPSB will meet at Mac 35 on 11/06 in the evening.

- **The Plan:** The plan is collective and focuses on the school system and the parish as a whole. Here are the specific plans for the schools in the Tremé/Lafitte neighborhood:
 - **Wheatley:** Wheatley has been closed since the storm and it is currently slated for replacement in the second phase of the plan. However, Providence has provided more recent numbers that will help inform decisions about when a new Wheatley should be built.
 - **Craig:** Renovations for Craig will be put to bid shortly and it is scheduled to re-open at its Tremé site in Fall 2009. It will undergo a total renovation.
 - **Bell and Mondy:** These schools will not reopen. There will be future discussions about what the buildings will be used for: possibly community centers, affordable housing, or various other uses. It is important to know that a closed school does not mean that the building will be demolished. These schools are “land banked” and can be reused by the school district, saved for future use, sold or traded with another public entity, like HANO.
 - **Wicker:** Wicker is an open space school; it does not have walls. The noise level in the building is difficult to control and as a result, the enrollment capacity of the school has been reduced. Wicker is slated to be renovated in Phase VI of the plan.

Questions and Discussion

Responses, where provided, are in italics.

1. Thank you for coming. There seems to be a solid plan for the schools, but my concern and question is why is this taking so long? We want families to come back to our community, but they won't do it without good schools. *I agree. It has been three years and we've been in the planning process for one year. While we were waiting to take action on the entire plan, we started a short-term program. We've broken ground on three schools and three more are in design. We've had challenges also; it took FEMA one year to agree to fund rebuilding Fannie C. Williams. There has been a lot of work and we'll continue to work to ensure we're making the best investment we can.*
2. Are you planning to tear down Wicker? *It is a possibility and the comments you give us will make a difference. Wheatley is another school we must consider – part of the community would like to tear down Wheatley, others would like to keep it. Your community has been the primary enrollment for Wheatley, so your voice is loud.*
3. How do we submit comments? *You can email them to masterplan@rsdla.net , call them in, fax them, mail them or go to the library and submit them. I'll be sure to leave all of that information with Tammy Crumpton and Emelda Paul.*

4. Will you make public the allocation of the \$700 million so that we know which schools are receiving funds and how much money is coming to our area? *All of the FEMA money for individual schools and sites goes into one general fund. The money does not have to be spent on the specific project it was allotted for.*
5. Is it possible to see the budget for Phase I? Which projects will be funded? *The annual capital budget must be presented to and approved by the OPSB and the RSD. We are in the process of creating that now and we will hold another public comment period for the budget. We are now receiving the costs for many of our first projects. Landry will cost close to \$50 million; Wilson will be \$265/sq. ft.*
6. Can we get that budget information before the plan is adopted? *It is my understanding that the budget numbers will come out at a later time.*

Comments by **Emelda Paul**, Lafitte Residents' Council

- **Need for New School:** These children deserve a state of the art school. If a new community is to be built, we need a better school to send the children to.
- **Participation:** In this process, the numbers mean a lot. It is important for the community to be visible in the process, so all are encouraged to come to as many of the meetings as they can. It is alright to ask questions; to get the best for the children, we need to come together with loud voices.

Comments by **Jim Kelly**, CEO & President, Providence Community Housing

- **Length of Wait:** There are families in Baton Rouge, in Houston and in other places who are waiting to come home but will not do so if they have to wait for their school to open. When the charrette process for Lafitte began, we spoke with the RSD. With the number of families returning, there needs to be a new school on or near the Wheatley site to accommodate these children. Under the current plan, it will be 15 years before Wicker is rebuilt and 5 years for Wheatley.
 - **Need for a New School:** Providence is developing 600 units of housing that must be complete by December 2010. There will be 600 families returning to the area. Wicker has the second worst test scores in the district, Craig is not much better.
7. Landry is not in our community. What about John McDonough? Or Clark? These are the high schools in our community. *(Thelma French, Director of Board Operations, OPSB) All of the high schools in the immediate community, with the exception of one, are not under the jurisdiction of the OPSB. It is important that we are not divided by jurisdiction and focus on serving all of our children. Before the storm, New Orleans had 25 high schools, but only the student population for 15. Today, we need only about ten high schools for all of the students for the next ten years. Also, children learn differently today. We'll have K – 8 schools and 9 – 12 schools. High school students will have options: there will be a business school, an arts school, so that children with particular interests can go to those schools. John Mac is scheduled to close in 2013. At that time, Mac35 will accommodate two high school programs. The plan is a blueprint, not an authorization. Contact your elected officials and tell them your concerns. They will be voting on the plan.*

Lona Hankins, Director of Capital Projects, Recovery School District

- **Renovations to Craig Elementary:** Craig should be put out to bid by the end of the month. There were some funding hurdles and the parameters of the project changes. By the end of the year, the school will have all new windows, electrical and mechanical upgrades, a quiet air conditioning system, a kitchen addition and the dip will be removed from the cafeteria. The third floor will have additional bathrooms and a science lab.
 - **Enrollment at Craig:** Current enrollment is 560; the renovated building will be able to accommodate 650 students.
8. Wicker is an open school with a horrible layout and is currently serving hundreds of students. Both the RSD and the OPSB acknowledge that the conditions are terrible for learning. Why isn't Wicker a priority? Why wait 15 years? Is it necessary to build new schools in remote locations at the cost of neglecting needy open schools? *(Thelma French) The new schools, like the partnership with Audubon your referenced, play an important part in broadening the experiences and opportunities for our children. We need to move past the 'neighborhood vs. neighborhood' issues. Partnerships are also valuable and can reduce our costs for building a new school.*
 9. What are the plans for schools that are not being renovated? What is the plan for upkeep of non-operating schools? *(Lona Hankins) In the operating budget, we have provided for stabilization funds and making small investments to make schools last. Our goal is also to remove blight as quickly as possible from neighborhoods.*
 10. Would it be possible to engage the business community? At one point (before the storm), UPS was interested in helping to put walls up at Wicker? *We would be happy to talk with you more about that.*

Mr. Alvin Banks, member of the Resident Council, reads the petition calling for a new school on or near Wheatley in Phase I of the Master Plan. Residents are invited to sign the letter if they wish.

II. HANO Update

Mr. Ronald Suthall, a Senior Asset Manager, offered an apology on behalf of Tracy Mercadel who had fallen ill and could not attend the meeting as well as the following updates:

- All 94 units have been renovated and 24 are currently occupied.
- There are 65 vacant properties that HANO would like to fill. They will be occupied until further notice, most likely March 2009.

Questions and Discussion

Responses, where provided, are in italics.

1. Why was all of the money put into the renovation if those units will be torn down? *I think that's above my pay grade. We heard residents saying that they wanted to come back, so we tried to make that option available to people.*
2. If I'm interested in occupying the unit, is there a phone number? *If you are a pre-Katrina public housing resident, they can call 504 529 1591*

3. The staff at the main office at Iberville will not answer any questions about Lafitte. Who should I speak with? *Question answered privately, due to time constraints.*

III. Providence / Enterprise Update

Matt Morrin, Enterprise Community Partners, offered these updates:

- The city council approved the Providence / Enterprise plan this month.
- With the advice and input from the resident council, Interstate Realty Management has been selected as the property management company. Providence / Enterprise will be reaching out to folks to meet with the property manager to discuss lease and criteria issues, as well as folks moving back in.
- Work with a general contractor has started. In the near future, there will be information about time and dates for job training programs and opportunities for work.

V. Adjournment

Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 12, 6 pm

Dinner and Raffle