

October 31, 2008

Dear Residents of Lafitte:

This month we have news about schools – a priority issue that Lafitte residents have been raising with us since October 2006. The Recovery School District (RSD) is developing a School Facilities Master Plan. Residents of Lafitte heard about the Plan directly from the RSD Director of Planning, Ms. Constance Caruso and from the New Orleans School Board Ms. Thelma French, on October 8th at our monthly meeting with Lafitte residents. Many residents, organizations in the Tremé community, as well as Providence and Enterprise had concerns that the Master Plan was not doing enough to ensure there would be excellent local schools for Lafitte children.

Acting on their concerns, several hundred residents signed a petition urging the RSD to do more for the Lafitte and Tremé community. We are happy to let you know that this week Superintendent Valles and Assistant Superintendent Burke committed to replacing Wheatley in Phase 1 of the School Facilities Master Plan (beginning 2009), and to renovating or replacing Wicker in Phase 2 (beginning 2013). This is a significant improvement to the Master Plan, and very exciting news for us. We will be sure to continue keeping you updated as we hear more from the RSD on this.

A few other quick updates:

- Providence and Enterprise are closely monitoring the current global financial crisis that is also being felt across the USA. We're working hard to ensure it has as little impact as possible on the redevelopment of Lafitte. We expect that it may be a bit more challenging to raise funds, however we're confident that the redevelopment will continue on schedule. We're also working to minimize any impacts to our Affordable Home Ownership Program.
- The re-opening of the Sojourner Truth Community Center is taking longer than we expected because of the time we need to ensure the building is up-to-date in terms of fire & safety code. We're very hopeful that we will be able to open the building before Christmas. Until Sojourner Truth opens, our monthly meetings with Lafitte residents (held on the second Wednesday of every month) will continue to be held at the St. Peter Claver cafeteria. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, November 12th, 2008 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm. If you're a Lafitte resident that has moved back to New Orleans, we hope to see you there.
- Starting in November, LaTonya Williams from the Providence office, will begin connecting with Lafitte residents to confirm we have your current contact information, and ideally also an email address to get in touch with you. She'll also be asking you about your interest in jobs that may be available as part of the redevelopment, and upcoming home ownership opportunities. If you have recently moved or have a new phone number and/or email, please let LaTonya know by contact her at 504-821-7226 or email at lwilliams@providencech.org.

As always, we hope all is well with you and your families.

Sincerely,


James R. Kelly
President & CEO
Providence Community Housing


Michelle Whetten
Director, Gulf Coast Rebuilding Initiative
Enterprise Community Partners