HOUSTON MEETING
Record of Feedback

December 2, 2006

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This report was written by Nicole Swerhun, Neutral Third-Party Process Advisor and Facilitator to Providence Community Housing and Enterprise. It is based on both verbal feedback from over 40 participants, as well as notes written in 26 workbooks submitted by individuals (19 of which identified themselves as Lafitte residents) and another 8 workbooks completed by facilitators who summarized discussion at small tables. It is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript. If you have questions or comments on this report, contact Nicole Swerhun at nicole@swerhun.com or (504) 613-0167.

Copies of the conceptual Homebuilding Plan, as well as Homebuilding Plan newsletters and other materials are available from Providence Community Housing at www.providencech.org. Providence can be contacted at info@providencech.org or phone (504) 821-7222.

Meeting Overview

Over 40 people attended the Houston meeting from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm on Saturday, December 2, 2006. The workshop was held at the Full Gospel Cathedral Church of God in Christ (COGIC), 1369 Spears Road, Houston, Texas. A number of members of the Homebuilding Plan team also participated, as well as facilitators from the All Congregations Together (ACT) outreach team.

The purpose of the Meeting was:

- To talk to Lafitte families living in Houston about the work that Providence Community Housing and Enterprise are doing in the Treme/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier communities;
- To tell people what we've heard from residents to date; and
- To understand the needs of Lafitte families living in Houston, and discuss how the Homebuilding Plan team can help meet those needs – through support services and the repair and replacement of homes and apartments.

Participants were also informed that the information gathered from the meeting would also be forwarded to HUD and HANO for use in their historic review process (Section 106).

The agenda included:

- An opening prayer by Elder LaFrance from the Full Gospel Cathedral COGIC;
- A welcome from Father Michael Jacques, St. Peter Claver Church, New Orleans;
- Facilitator's introduction and agenda review by Mary Fontenot (All Congregations Together) and Nicole Swerhun;
- Remarks by Nadine Jarmon and Jim Kelly, Providence Community Housing, Chickie Grayson, Enterprise, and Ray Gindroz, Urban Design Associates (UDA); and
- Small table and full room discussions.

The following focus questions were posed to participants:

<u>Regarding Support Services</u>

1. What type of support services would be most helpful to you? How can Providence Community Housing and Enterprise help make those services easy for you to access?
2. Would you like assistance returning to New Orleans? If so, give us your name and up-to-date contact information here.

<u>Regarding the Homebuilding Plan</u>

1. Using the large map on your table, identify the 3 best and worst places in the community. Use a green dot to identify the best places. Use a red dot to identify the worst places.
2. What would you like to see in your community in the future?
3. Review the pictures at your table that show some of the ideas being considered for the Homebuilding Plan. What do you like about the pictures? What don't you like?
4. Use a yellow dot to indicate where you might like to live in the community.
5. Do you have any other advice for the Homebuilding Plan team?

Summary of Feedback

The points listed below summarize the key messages heard. There is much more information included in the rest of this report that reflects the rich range of opinions expressed.

- **Frustration with HUD and HANO.** Participants had a lot of questions regarding the future of Lafitte, and particularly around the decision to demolish Lafitte. They understood that Providence and Enterprise were not in a position to answer many of these questions, however they were also frustrated that nobody from HUD or HANO was at the meeting.

- **Life in Houston is tough.** Houston is a huge place, and people are having lots of problems getting around the city – which has an impact on everything from grocery shopping, finding work, getting to and from work, getting kids to school, and getting to the doctor. Employment is also difficult, especially when people identify themselves as being from New Orleans or Louisiana. Seniors are having a particularly hard time. Some children are also getting treated differently in school.

- **Many people just want to come home.** People would like assistance returning to New Orleans. They could use help finding housing in New Orleans, and in some cases help covering moving costs, as well as the deposit and first month's rent. Even if it's just transitional or temporary housing, many people want to come back as soon as possible.

- **Support services would be helpful.** There are a lot of ways the Homebuilding Plan team could help Lafitte residents, either by directly providing support or connecting residents to existing supports and resources. In addition to help with transportation and employment (described above), people said they would like help getting job training, trauma counseling, child care, and health care, paying utility bills and in some cases paying rent.

- **Many people liked the ideas proposed in the Homebuilding Plan.** Most people said they liked the pictures that showed different ideas for the future of the Treme/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier communities. They liked the landscaping, space for kids to play and neighbors to meet and walk, the design of the houses, and the community interaction. There were mixed opinions on the proposed view of a Seniors Building.

Map of the Homebuilding Plan Study Area
(outlined in red)

Detailed Feedback on SUPPORT SERVICES NEEDED

What type of support services would be most helpful to you? How can Providence Community Housing and Enterprise help make those services easy for you to access?

1. *Transportation:* The city is so big, that getting around Houston is a major problem. People need help finding a church that picks them up (e.g. offers a van service), and help traveling to work, medical appointments, to get groceries, and to get kids to school. Some people are traveling 4 hours/day.

2. *Employment:* People need help getting jobs in Houston. Some said the work force requirement is too harsh, and that they've been cut off from food stamps. And when they can get a job, they're not being paid enough (some are working for $6/hour, less then they got paid in New Orleans). They are being told not to put "Louisiana" on job applications, and if they do they are experiencing job discrimination against New Orleans residents. In some cases, employers don't like them. Some said that they can't get a job through "work source". Participants talked about wanting an advocate who can work on their behalf (e.g. to help with disputes that come up on-the-job). Job training is also needed for the service industry and managerial programs. On-the-job training would also be helpful.

3. *Getting back home:* People need help getting back home. That includes help finding a stable place in New Orleans on a temporary basis. Some need help with a deposit and first month's rent, and help with moving expenses (e.g. to rent a U-Haul). They need stores to be open in the neighborhood when they go back. When they get home they need affordable housing/homeownership.

"This is what I need someone to do for us – help us find a home to go back to so my daughter can find a job and take care of herself and her child. Thank you."

Participant Workbook

"Evacuees are picked on and treated differently. We need to get home."

Participant Workbook

4. *Health care:* Many people are having trouble getting Medicaid assistance. "If you're getting 7 medicines you can't pay but for 4". Houston won't take/stopped taking Louisiana Medicaid. Some need help finding Medicaid doctors, and assistance paying medical bills and for prescriptions. People also need home health services for the elderly (prescription drugs, wheelchairs).

5. *Trauma counseling:* A number of participants said they need help finding counseling services in Houston, to talk about their flood experiences, about the things they've seen that are on their mind, and for help calming their nerves.

6. *Utilities:* Almost all participants talked about needing help covering the cost of utilities – electric/light bills.

7. *Childcare:* Some people need help with childcare/nursery, especially while they're looking for work. Services are also needed for special needs children.

8. *Disabled assistance:* People talked about very specific things they need, like handicap rails on the tub in the bathroom, braces for hands to help with arthritis, ramp/wheelchair for disabled, and a general program for the disabled.

9. *Money isn't flowing:* People need help getting their rent assistance, with some saying that FEMA wouldn't pay their rent. People need help figuring out what to do if they're not receiving Section 8 or FEMA funds.

10. *Education:* Would be helpful to have tutoring programs for LEAP. A school just for New Orleans children was also suggested a few times, which could help deal with problems with Houston kids.

11. *Food & Clothing:* Some people need clothing/food stamp assistance. They said that they can't get food stamps without a job. It's one reason people say they need to get back to Louisiana.

12. *Other supports that would be helpful:* Help finding a church. Senior services (help doing things, senior daycare). Help with money management. Education for people that are HIV+.

"Resources to acquire resources are not accessible (transportation to work not available, so job not granted)…sometimes all our resources denied after a LA Drivers License is presented."

From participant workbook

Would you like assistance returning to New Orleans?

25 of the 26 people who handed in their workbooks at the end of the meeting provided their contact information in response to this question (including a couple of workbooks that included contact information for more than one person). 19 people identified themselves as Lafitte residents, 18 people indicated that they would like help returning home, and 17 indicated they would like someone from the Homebuilding Plan team to contact them. *The contact information for these participants has been forwarded to the Homebuilding Plan team for follow-up.*

Detailed Feedback on HOMEBUILDING PLAN IDEAS

What people like best and least about their community in New Orleans (with a focus on locating the best and worst places on large community maps)

Liked best: Community center (many people mentioned Sojourner Truth), St. Peter Claver, Rocheblave tennis court, Craig School, Dooky Chase, Orleans and Tonti (close to church, stores, school), playground and parks, St. Phillip, Orleans Avenue & Lafitte Avenue, North Broad & Roman Street, historic, playground, 7th Ward Orleans, Broad & Banks, LaHarpe & Claiborne, keep the community together, it's near to the schools, Tonti, Orleans, Broad, keep the spirit alive, keep the busline, Orleans & Claiborne, Tulane, Broad Street, Orleans & Johnson, Claiborne & Orleans, Lafitte, Tonti Street, St. Phillip

Liked least: Corner stores, bars, hotels and motels (MRV, Rainbow, Brown Derby motels), N. Prieur and Orleans, Claiborne & Orleans, Basin Street, Claiborne & St. Ann, Joe's cozy corner, Tonti Court, Palmyrs and Banks (crime areas), Dumaine St. (killings), close strip of night clubs on Orleans and Claiborne, Dumaine and N. Broad drug activity, Dorgenois and Orleans abandoned property, Claiborne, N. Robertson, Iberville, Lafitte Housing Project, St. Louis & Philip, drugs in the area, Claiborne, Prieur, St. Ann, no need to have people hanging around the store, Dumaine, Rocheblave, Tonti, crimes, drugs, killing, Iberville, St. Ann & Prieur, Dumaine & Prieur, Dergenois, N. Villier, N. Robertson, Claiborne Ave.

What would you like to see in your community in the future?

Health: Health center, medical services for everyone (24 hours), medical health clinics, satellite hospital

Children and youth: Positive events for children, child care, day care centers, training for teens and young adults, safe and clean playground, state of the art public schools, GED tutoring programs, playground with security, playgroups, a nice place for the kids, community colleges

Seniors: Senior citizen center, seniors assistance, bingo hall

Safety: More police activities involved in community safety

Culture: Need a museum – a local museum that addresses local culture, preserving the historic, cultural, and heritage value of our community

Employment: Job training/tutoring/vocational training center, open a lot of local businesses that employ locals that live in the area (now people from other communities or states – a lot of landlords also own local businesses, but if they're not hiring locals, how can the locals pay the rent?), community colleges (since lots of jobs now ask for training).

Services: Special needs services

Housing: One floor house, wide doorway for wheelchair, ramp

Other things in the neighborhood: Local grocery stores (Circle Food Store), barber shops/beauty salons, movie theater, skate rinks, pet area, shopping area, library, schools K-12, put a church in the community – right on the Lafitte site.

Best Places in the Community (Green Dots)

Worst Places in the Community (Red Dots)

Review the pictures at your table that show some of the ideas being considered for the Homebuilding Plan. What do you like about the pictures? What don't you like?

1. Proposed view of neighborhood infill

- Like everything about the picture.
- Like the landscape.
- Need a pet area.
- Should have off street parking.
- Area is nice, lighting, houses aren't too close together, no corner stores, spacious surroundings, trees, gardening. (GREEN DOT)
- Dumaine Street is too narrow.

2. Proposed view of infill around Wicker School

- Like the picture.
- Landscape and the fence makes it safe (keeps people from running through).
- Like picture, but think area should be gated so people not coming in and out of the community.
- Wide streets are good – street should be wider.
- 2 green dots.

3. Proposed view of new housing on Lafitte site

- Like play area for kids.
- Everything is real lovely.
- Open space for kids to play.
- 2 green dots.
- I don't like it. It looks too much like it is today. If you're going to change things, you should change it all. I want it to look different.

4. Proposed view of Lafitte Street and Management Building

- Like picture.
- Good for walking and talking with friends and family.
- 2 green dots.

5. Proposed view of Senior Building

- Need shopping area.
- Mixed reviews, some like 2 storys, others don't.
- Looks like it belongs in the French Quarter ☹.
- 1 red dot.

General feedback on the ideas being considered for the Homebuilding Plan

"We understand that it is going to be built, but if we can, we would love our red bricks back."

Quote from a workshop participant. The comment was followed by applause from a number of others at the meeting.

What people said they liked about the pictures: A number of people said they liked the pictures, that they were really impressive and that people really enjoyed them. In particular participants said they liked the community interaction, preserving historical design, the fact that children's safety can be insured by the fences, the landscape is appealing, the senior center, the color of the homes, the landscape, trees, wide streets on some blocks, double homes.

What people said they didn't like: On street parking, some people thought the houses are too close together, and that more porches and backyards are needed (for each house – so we can have family gatherings), streets are narrow (kind of small), we don't want shot gun homes, some would like to see a bigger play area.

"What was so special about Lafitte? Why do people want to return? It had a little to do with how the community looked and that there was a roof over head. But why? The love. Love for community and self respect. The thing that distinguishes house from home is love, and that's what we want."

Quote from a workshop facilitator, reporting on behalf of his table. The comment was followed by applause from a number of others at the meeting.

Yellow dots show where workshop participants indicated that they would be interested in living

Do you have any other advice for the Homebuilding Plan team?

Support for moving ahead: Ready to go! I would like to help rebuild so I can come home. Great job. Keep striving for us.

People want to see:

- The Carver Theater restored.
- Tutoring and trauma counseling provided to residents.
- Modern houses with porches, yards, trees, 2 doors, and a parking area. Enlarge the bedrooms. Some would like two *whole* bathrooms, and the kitchen and the bedrooms to be large.
- Lots of trees and gardens, and a lot of lights. Safe roots (family ties) for kids. Make sure we have grocery stores. More light, more police.
- Affordable housing/home ownership is needed for low-moderate income families, disabled and elderly and family that care for a disabled family member.
- Get abandoned houses out. No liquor stores, and some people are also very concerned about corner stores.
- Keep community involved in the community center. One person suggested another community center at Lafitte and Galvez.
- More recreational activities for kids.

Concerns about Homebuilding Plan: Don't tear down the Lafitte. Renovate Lafitte in order to return families home sooner. Stop killing trees in community. I don't like the thought of housing being torn down because I'm ready to come home.

Urgency: I want to come home as soon as possible.

"It will also be a big help if the Lafitte was not torn down because it's making me stay where I don't wanna be."

Participant Workbook

"Would the site ever be torn down, so the new ideas can begin and we can return home? The sooner the better."

Workshop Participant

Jemera Johnoson's vision for the community

Questions & Answers

Participants asked a number of questions during the meeting. Many of those questions (with answers *in italics*) are listed here. The Homebuilding Plan team will continue to work to provide answers to these and other frequently asked questions in future meetings and newsletters.

Related to the future of Lafitte and the Homebuilding Plan

- Has Lafitte been sold? *No, HUD and HANO still own Lafitte.*
- Would the site ever be torn down, so the new ideas can begin and we can return home? The sooner the better. *If the site was torn down, then we would rebuild with better, more family friendly homes and apartments.*
- How long will it take to build the homes? *Homes will start to be available in 12 months.*
- Can we participate in helping build them? *We're looking at job training programs where former residents/residents can be trained in the trades through the AFL- CIO. We are also talking to lots of service providers about supports for Lafitte residents.*
- Because we addressed hot areas on the map, what will be available in terms of police to keep the area safe? Can there be better lighting, eliminate blight, more eyes on the street? We need community-based policing. *We will take that as a recommendation..*
- In order to create a quality community, will there be a school that is independent from government so 20 years from now we'll have quality kids? *That's one of the things we can advocate for.*
- Who would an actual vendor speak with in helping with rebuilding? *Contact Dr. Nadine Jarmon at Providence Community Housing (504- 821-7222).*
- Why can't we buy the abandoned property for $1.00 like they are offering organizations? *That would need to be explored with the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority.*

Help coming home

- If it could happen, please send for all the seniors first, they are homesick. *We are working to bring home seniors quickly, and are repairing places like Annunciation Inn and St. Ann's.*
- What do we need to do to prepare to come home? *Contact our Homebuilding Team so we can explore options together with you and help you develop a plan.*

Help needed in Houston

- A long long time ago people used to come and watch our kids while parents had to run errands – is that kind of service still possible? *We'll take that as advice as we develop our Supportive Services program.*

- Since utilities are so high, could assistance be made available to help pay them? *Yes, we would be happy to explore that with you.*

- I'm not employed here, I was employed in LA, what avenues do I have? *Case managers will work one-on-one with folks. There are lots of jobs in New Orleans now because there are not a lot of people.*

- Who can I speak to (here in Houston) about the emotional problems related to the flood? *You can contact the local Catholic Charities office.*

- Will Section 8 vouchers be honored? *Yes.*

Questions for HUD and HANO

- Can Providence/Enterprise patch up the major problems with the units so we can come back home? *That's in HUD and HANO's hands.*

- Why can't you open Lafitte up temporarily before you redevelop? *That has been suggested to HUD and HANO and is under discussion. It is their decision.*

- Why can't we come home and clean our own places to live in? *Again, that's in HUD and HANO's hands.*

Participants felt strongly that HUD and HANO should have been at the meeting to answer their questions. They added that the amount of money provided from HUD and HANO (to help people move) is not enough.

Participant List

Participants were encouraged, but not required, to sign in at the meeting. In total, over 60 people attended the meeting, including Lafitte residents as well as members of the Homebuilding Plan team and the Outreach and Facilitation team. In total, 19 people identified themselves as Lafitte residents.

Everyone who signed in at the meeting and provided complete address and/or email information will receive a copy of this Summary Report. Note that some of the handwriting was tough to read, and so the names provided here represent a best effort to transcribe the information provided. Affiliations, where provided, are also included here.

Participants are listed alphabetically by last name. Affiliations are included, where provided.

Milton Anderson, *Full Gospel Cathedral COGIC*
Ron Angeletti
Mathews Brock
Clarence Brown
Carmalita Bryant
Mazie Burris
Yolanda Butler
Phyllis Davalie
Mervin Dolliole
Lois R. Eugene
Yretha Evans
Dwayne Finnie
Carolyn Fulford
Jnylesia Fulford
Patricia Fulford
Jacqueline Fulford
Jacqueline Gray
Gail Green
Yetta Harpa
LaToya Harper
Ballerina Jarvis
Anna Jarvis
Lloyd Jernigan, *20/20 DSI*
Deborah Johnson
Earline Johnson
Leslie Johnson
Mary Johnson
Sheila Johnson
Lisa V. Kelly
Elder Joseph LaFrance, *Full Gospel Cathedral COGIC*
Joyce S. Owens, *Joyce S. Owens Real Estate, New Orleans*
Maggie Ruph Marshall
Marilyn Paye
Nancy Payne
Cheryl Scales
Mary Scott
Joyce Terro
Mark Thiele
Gloria M. Wells
Chiquita Willis
Michael Wilson, *Full Gospel Cathedral COGIC*

Participants provided names and phone number for another 20 Lafitte residents who were unable to attend the meeting. This contact information will be used to continue to expand the list of contacts in the Homebuilding Plan outreach database.

Outreach: All Congregations Together (ACT)

Mary Fontenot, New Orleans
Deborah Jackson, Houston
Daniel Mathieu, New Orleans
Wayne Nuriddin, Harvey, LA
Keisha Owens, New Orleans
Dan Packard, New Orleans
Emelda Paul, Mariscopa, AZ
Mary Scott, Houston
Sabrina Short, New Orleans
Karen Trudeaux, Houston
Cheryl Turner, Metairie, LA

Homebuilding Plan Team

Charlotte Bourgeois, Providence Community Housing
Nadine Jarmon, Providence Community Housing
Jim Kelly, Providence Community Housing
Chickie Grayson, Enterprise
Ron Wilson, Enterprise
Reverend Michael Jacques, St. Peter Claver
Tiffany Haile, Urban Design Associates
Ray Gindroz, Urban Design Associates

Meeting Facilitation

Nicole Swerhun

Background to the Meeting

New Orleans has a major housing shortage and creative solutions are needed quickly.

Two non-profit organizations teamed up to help address this need – Providence Community Housing and Enterprise. Providence is a Catholic housing initiative that was formed in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. Enterprise is an organization that's been around for over 20 years creating decent affordable homes and rebuilding communities. Its mission is to see that all low-income people in the United States have the opportunity for fit and affordable housing, and to move up and out of poverty into the mainstream of American life.

In August 2006, Providence and Enterprise were selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) to help plan a new community on and around the site of the Lafitte public housing development. This followed HANO's June 2006 decision to demolish Lafitte. This was because of the extensive repairs needed to bring the development up to HUD's Housing Quality Standards and to meet City code compliance.

In agreeing to lead the replacement of Lafitte, Providence and Enterprise committed to developing a Homebuilding Plan that would build at least 1500 units of housing in the Tremé/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier area to meet the needs of a broad range of households, including seniors and families. They also committed to providing:

- an absolute opportunity for the 865 families and individuals who lived in the Lafitte development before Katrina to return to better quality homes and a healthier neighborhood;
- nine hundred subsidized homes, the same number as in the Lafitte development before the storm, integrated into mixed-income communities on and around the site;
- community supportive services; and
- an opportunity for resident participation in planning and developing a more vibrant community.

Contact with residents began in mid-September 2006, with the distribution of the first Homebuilding Plan Newsletter. Each Lafitte resident was mailed a copy, along with a feedback form designed to collect information to help guide development of the Homebuilding Plan. A New Orleans based non-profit organization, All Congregations Together (ACT) then began the process of calling each Lafitte household to make sure they had received the newsletter and were aware of the process underway. This outreach continues today.

During the first week of October 2006, Providence and Enterprise hosted a week long series of working sessions to begin developing a conceptual Homebuilding Plan. Over 300 people participated. Because so many Lafitte residents are not in New Orleans, Providence and Enteprise have committed to holding meetings in other cities. The December 2, 2006 meeting in Houston was the first of these meetings.