

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

Homebuilding Plan for Treme/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier

Date Wednesday, March 14, 2007
Ujima Building, 1019 N. Prieur

Participants Residents: Sidney Danfruchard, Leah Green, Edwina Joseph, Cynthia Magruff, Sarah McMorris (NOLAC), Shirley Parker, Emelda Paul, Sharon Pierce, Leonetta Terrell

Providence Community Housing: Nadine Jarmon (Vice President Community Development), Tammy Crumpton (Director Resident Services), Jim Kelly (President & CEO)

Enterprise: Christine Madigan, Vice President

Other people working on the Homebuilding Plan: Daniel Mathieu, All Congregations Together (outreach), Nicole Swerhun (facilitation)

The purpose of the meeting was to meet with a small group of Lafitte residents living in New Orleans to:

- Provide a small group of Lafitte residents living in New Orleans with an update on the status of the Homebuilding Plan and related activities
- Get advice from residents regarding the upcoming HANO survey, and advice on what to consider when deciding which residents get to come back first (to phased development)

1. **Summary of Updates provided by the Homebuilding Plan Team**

What's happening with the lawsuit and the Katrina Bill? Barney Frank and Maxine Waters (both are members of Congress) have held hearings to better understand what's happening with public housing in New Orleans. Ms. Emelda and Jim have both spoken to members of Congress. When Maxine Waters asked former public housing residents if they wanted a phased redevelopment, many people indicated their support. Providence respects that the legal advocates are trying to stop the demolition. That being said, the approach that Providence has taken regarding the Lafitte redevelopment (including one-for-one replacement of units, involvement of residents in planning, etc.) is emerging as a model for other developments in New Orleans.

Congress update. We understand that Congress is supposed to finalize the Katrina Bill in April, around Easter. Then it needs to go to the House and Senate for approval. Our hope is that they will approve the Bill in May. Key items in the Bill: (1) HUD is required to survey all public housing residents and ask them whether they want to return to HANO public housing, and if so, when? (2) HANO is required to make minimum of 3000 units available by August 1st (or comparable units with comparable rent) to accommodate all residents that want to return; (3) HANO can't demolish unless have plan for 1-for-1 replacement; (4) Extension of Disaster Voucher Program (DVP) to January 1, 2008.

How would phased redevelopment work? Providence wants to make sure that if a Lafitte residents wants to come home immediately, that there are enough units open on the Lafitte site to accommodate those residents temporarily – until the new units are built. We know that some people don't want to come back to the old units, and that some don't want to come back temporarily. That's why we're working on acquiring other properties in the neighborhood where we can build subsidized housing.

Questions and Answers

(responses from the Providence/Enterprise team are written in *italics*)

- Is there any way we can speed up the procedure and get people home faster? *HUD and HANO have 600 units available for people today. We need to get the word out to former Lafitte residents – a lot of people don't know these units are available. We're also pushing HANO to get into the units to clean, patch, and paint them. We hope to be getting people back in 4-6 months. We want to be realistic because getting people back won't happen overnight. We also think that Lafitte units should be reserved for Lafitte residents only. We're also advocating to open units in all the developments.*

*Note that Sarah McMorris of NOLAC has a list of the 600 units available, and that any residents interested in receiving information can call her at 529-1000 ext. 243.
- Have you estimated the number of people who don't want to come back to Lafitte? *Not yet. We did a basic baseline survey, but now we need much more specific information.*
- They're saying that the housing is going to open up in August. Is that true? *August might be reasonable. September or October may be more reasonable.*
- What do people with Vouchers do when housing opens up in New Orleans? What would we need to do to move into a new unit? Would I give up my Voucher? *We're working with HUD right now to sort this out. The most immediate next step involves a survey that HUD and HANO will be implementing to figure out how many people want to come home to re-opened units. They have given Providence the opportunity to provide input into the survey, but ultimately it is their responsibility to design and deliver it.*

2. Discussion Summary

Representatives from Providence asked residents a number of questions about how they felt about moving back to existing units at Lafitte.

- **Would former Lafitte residents want to move back to re-opened units at Lafitte?** Many residents indicated that although they love Lafitte, and they loved their old unit at Lafitte, they don't want to go back to the place they left – they want better. They talked about wanting a unit that is more modern. Some felt this way even if it meant that they'd have to wait longer to move into new units of housing.

Others were interested in moving back into Lafitte, if the units were cleaned and gutted, and living there until the new units are ready.

Nadine noted that Providence would be asked HUD/HANO to pay for 2 relocations of Lafitte residents (for those who want to move into re-opened units temporarily).

- **If they moved into re-opened units at Lafitte, would residents want only former Lafitte residents as neighbors? Or would you be comfortable with residents from other public housing residents as neighbors?** Some participants at the meeting said that they'd prefer to only have former Lafitte residents as their neighbors, however others said that they would be open to having non-Lafitte residents as neighbors, as long as the screening process was strong.
- **Resident concern about losing voucher.** Residents at the meeting expressed a concern that if they turn down the opportunity to return to a re-opened unit in New Orleans, then they might lose their voucher. They talked about some residents who went to Iberville because they were offered housing there, and they thought if they didn't accept it then they'd lose their right to public housing.
- **Providence asked residents at the meeting who should have first preference to move into re-opened units at Lafitte?** Residents thought that first priority should be given to seniors, and that age was more important than seniority within the public housing system. They thought the next priority should be families (with people in their 40s and 50s). The importance of strong screening and background checks was emphasized. It was suggested that the whole house be screened, and not just the "Head of Household". Then for the things that can't be screened (e.g. boyfriends that come to life with girlfriends in public housing), strong enforcement is required to ensure that public housing standards are met.
- **Need for facilities.** At least one resident at the meeting thought it very important that community facilities be in place before residents come home. Right now better schooling and better jobs are creating an incentive for former Lafitte residents to stay where they are rather than coming home to New Orleans. Providence staff asked the residents if even with no school and no job, would residents still want to come home? And residents at the meeting said that yes, some people would still want to come back.
- **Lafitte Residents Bill of Rights.** The opportunity to create a Lafitte Residents Bill of Rights was raised, and residents thought that it could be a good idea.
- **Providence outreach to residents – expanding to Baton Rouge and Houston.** Tammy provided an update on the support being provided to Lafitte residents living in New Orleans. She indicated that the process of setting up support through the Louisiana Family Recovery Corps was taking longer than expected, however the whole Providence team is working hard to keep things moving. She also emphasized how important it is for residents to be open with case managers about their needs. Nadine indicated that in addition to work with former Lafitte residents in New Orleans, Providence is working on opening an office in Houston and Baton Rouge.

- **Getting newsletters?** Providence asked residents at the meeting if they had received the recent newsletter (mailed out at the end of February). Most people said that they hadn't received it, and Providence committed to double-checking to ensure mail was going to their most recent address, and to sending newsletters by 1st class mail.
- **Additional residents interested in being involved?** Jim asked people at the meeting to think about other residents that may be interested in being involved in the group, and to invite them to participate in the next meeting.

4. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is April 11th, 6:00 – 7:30 pm at the Ujima Building (1019 North Prieur).

A Draft Record of Discussion from this meeting will be given to all participants for review before the notes are finalized. Draft Minutes from the February 6th, 2007 meeting will be finalized as written.