

## **Nagin OKs razing of Lafitte complex**

**HUD has addressed concerns, he says**

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The light-brown bricks of the Lafitte public housing complex will soon be rubble.

Mayor Ray Nagin signed its demolition permit Monday, allowing the destruction of all but 196 units, which are being preserved temporarily for returning public-housing residents.

Shortly after the City Council voted in December to demolish the "Big Four" public housing developments, the mayor signed three of the four permits. Since then backhoes and dumptrucks have been working steadily to pull down and haul away apartment buildings at the B.W. Cooper, C.J. Peete and St. Bernard complexes.

But the mayor kept his pen from Lafitte's demolition permit, saying that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development hadn't handed over what he and the City Council had requested. Specifically, as a condition of demolition the mayor and council wanted to see the redevelopers' financing plans, master-development agreements signed by all resident councils, documentation that the Housing Authority of New Orleans had provided enough affordable housing for returning public-housing residents, and an expansion of HANO's current one-man board to include local representation and input.

The mayor had always maintained that he would authorize the Lafitte demolition when HUD provided the necessary paperwork.

Still, preservationists and public-housing advocates held out hope that Lafitte's demolition was being reconsidered. They argued that Lafitte was better designed and maintained than the other complexes being razed and that it was an integral part of the culturally rich 6th Ward.

Those hopes were dashed Monday afternoon after the mayor said that he and council members were "comfortable" that HUD was honoring its wishes.

"We're really disappointed," said Walter Gallas head of the New Orleans field office for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "We believe that the city, HUD, and HANO are making a big mistake."

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