

**Draft Environmental Assessment
E.H Burton Property Emergency Group Temporary Housing
New Orleans, Orleans Parish
Hurricane Katrina
FEMA-1603-DR-LA**

A. Introduction

Hurricane Katrina, a Category 4 hurricane with a storm surge above normal high tide levels, moved across the Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama gulf coasts on August 29, 2005. Maximum sustained winds at landfall were estimated at 140 miles per hour.

President Bush declared a major disaster for the State of Louisiana due to damages from Hurricane Katrina and signed a disaster declaration (FEMA-1603-DR-LA) on August 29, 2005, authorizing the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide federal assistance in designated areas of Louisiana. FEMA proposes to administer this disaster assistance pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), PL 93-288, as amended. Section 408 of the Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Individual Assistance Program to provide emergency temporary housing for disaster victims whose homes are uninhabitable or destroyed as a result of the declared event.

This Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA); the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508); and FEMA's regulations implementing NEPA (44 CFR Part 10.9). The purpose of this DEA is to analyze potential environmental impacts of the proposed emergency group temporary housing site at the E.H. Burton Property, Orleans Parish, as part of an expedited review process. FEMA will use the findings in this DEA to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

B. Purpose and Need

Catastrophic damage from Hurricane Katrina has resulted in an extraordinary demand for housing assistance in Orleans Parish. The purpose of this action is to fulfill FEMA's mandate under the Individual Assistance Program to expeditiously provide temporary housing for disaster victims until permanent housing can be established. To date approximately 362,600 registrations for Federal assistance have been received from Orleans Parish. Of these requests, approximately 361,800 (99%) have been received from residents of New Orleans. There are approximately 49,000 applicants for temporary housing assistance at this time for Orleans Parish. The purpose of this action is to help satisfy a portion of the housing demand.

C. Environmental Review Process

In order to meet the urgent needs of disaster victims in need of temporary housing, FEMA has implemented an expedited environmental review process. The purpose of this document is to assist FEMA in fulfilling its environmental review responsibilities under NEPA and serve as a vehicle to document compliance under other applicable environmental laws. Laws and Executive Orders addressed through this EA include: the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice), and Farmland Protection Policy Act. Expedited agency consultation consisted of establishing a programmatic agreement with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office and an expedited review process with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other resource areas or issues evaluated in this EA include noise, visual resources, traffic, socioeconomics, safety and security, and hazardous and toxic waste.

The scope of FEMA's environmental review includes evaluating project alternatives, characterizing the affected environment, identifying potential environmental impacts, and outlining ways to reduce or minimize adverse

affects. This EA examines the site-specific environmental impacts associated with building a proposed FEMA group housing park on land to be leased by the General Service Administration for this purpose.

This EA was prepared based on a site evaluation, document research, and agency information. An electronic version of the Draft EA will be provided to interested agencies prior to and during the public comment period. The public participation period will be brief, as necessitated by the emergency circumstances. Agency coordination and consultation will be deemed complete at the end of the public comment period. FEMA believes that this process will allow for sufficient action analysis and meet the goal of providing timely federal assistance to disaster victims.

D. Site Selection Process and Alternatives

NEPA requires investigation and evaluation of reasonable project alternatives as part of the project environmental review process. At a minimum, FEMA's NEPA implementing regulations require the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives be evaluated. Concurrent to the Proposed Action; federally assisted housing options, including minor home repairs, rental assistance and locating a travel trailer or mobile home on a private site or in an existing park, are being exhausted first for those requesting housing assistance in the impacted area. These options rapidly diminish with the demand, accordingly, a remaining alternative is to build an emergency group temporary housing site where the above options do not satisfy the demand.

In order to expedite the group housing site selection process, FEMA's contractors initially review available aerial photos and maps, conduct site reconnaissance field surveys, and contact state and local officials to identify potential sites. Factors considered in choosing a site include: Demand for temporary housing in that area, site topography, property owner willingness, cost, past land use, currently planned for development, access to existing utilities, engineering feasibility, and environmental/cultural resource sensitivities. FEMA continues to evaluate alternative sites in Orleans Parish, and other parishes within southeast Louisiana. Although various alternatives have been and continue to be identified, the extraordinary amount of needed housing has limited this EA to analysis of one suitable site alternative at this time. The E.H. Burton property site was selected for further analysis because it meets the above described site selection criteria.

Alternative 1- No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, FEMA would not develop a group temporary housing site for this area. Displaced residents would continue to stay with relatives/friends, in hotels, or other temporary locations until they resolve their own long-term housing needs.

Alternative 2 – Develop the E.H. Burton Property Site with Pre-Fabricated Dwellings (Proposed Action)

The Proposed Action would provide group housing for eligible disaster victims displaced by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana. Disaster victims would be temporarily relocated to the site with an expected occupancy up to 18 months.

Project Location and Site Description

The proposed project area is located at 9905 Chef Menteur Highway in Orleans Parish in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. Approximately 5 acres of the property would be used for the site. The project is situated in a commercial and residential area which sustained heavy damage during Hurricane Katrina and subsequent flooding. Single family homes border the site to the north, and commercial and residential structures are present to the east across Read Boulevard, and to the south across Chef Menteur Highway. A seafood restaurant, which sustained damage during the hurricane, is present in the western portion of the project area. The project area will include the parking lot surrounding the seafood restaurant.

The portion of the project area not contained within the parking lot is covered with a large number of trees, and fairly dense undergrowth. The undergrowth consists of tall grass, greenbrier, and some poison ivy. Trees

include, among others, red maple, green ash, elms, and at least one cypress tree. Some trees appear to be at least 50 years in age, and many sustained damage as a result of the hurricane. Debris is scattered on the ground surface throughout the project area, and includes large pieces of concrete, metal sheeting, and a box of asbestos floor tiles. Ponding was evident throughout the property, and a small amount of sediment was observed on the ground surface during a site visit during January 2006. The E.H. Burton property lies above the 100 year floodplain in Zone B.

Project Description

The project description is based on the site preliminary design completed on 14 February, 2006 (Flour 2006). The proposed action would involve the construction of a travel trailer park (hereafter “the Park”) which would accommodate 87 units (see Figure 3 for preliminary site design). At this time, occupancy is not expected to exceed 18 months. In a letter dated February 3, 2006, the Mayor indicated that the park is approved for construction of a temporary housing travel trailer site for displaced neighborhood residents.

One (1) unit will be the site administration trailer. Nine (9) of the units will have American Disabilities Acts (ADA) access. Six (6) will be Accessibility Units – Park Model (AUPM) and three (3) will be Accessibility Units – Morgan Models.

Prior to occupancy, new utilities would be installed on site, including connecting potable water and sanitary sewer to the existing infrastructure. The city’s utility infrastructure has the capacity to handle the temporary increase in services and flow rates. There are existing access roads for the resident’s ingress and egress. Minor site excavation, grading and drainage would be required to prepare the site for occupancy once the property is cleaned and cleared. Storm water runoff would be conveyed through the city storm water system utilizing the sites natural drainage swales. A safety fence would also be installed and maintained around the Park perimeter. Any dead, declining or structurally weak trees will be removed as recommend by a professional arborist.

When the temporary housing need has ended, FEMA expects that the 87 travel trailers would be hauled from the site, to suitable locations elsewhere (to be determined on a case-by-case basis). The Park would then be seeded and reasonably restored to its previous conditions or used by the landowner in a manner consistent with local zoning classifications.

E. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

Table 1 summarizes the results of the environmental review process for the Proposed Action. Potential environmental impacts that were found to be negligible are not evaluated further. Resource areas that have the potential for impacts of minor, moderate, or major intensity are further developed in the following Section F. When applicable, mitigation measures that would reduce potential adverse effects are incorporated in Park development and required as conditions for the project to proceed. Definitions of the impact intensity are described below:

Negligible: The resource area (e.g., geology) would not be affected, or changes would be either non-detectable or if detected, would have effects that would be slight and local. Impacts would be well below regulatory standards, as applicable.

Minor: Changes to the resource would be measurable, although the changes would be small and localized. Impacts would be within or below regulatory standards, as applicable. Mitigation measures would reduce any potential adverse effects.

Moderate: Changes to the resource would be measurable and have both localized and regional scale impacts. Impacts would be within or below regulatory standards, but historical conditions are being altered on a short-

term basis. Mitigation measures would be necessary and the measures would reduce any potential adverse effects.

Major: Changes would be readily measurable and would have substantial consequences on a local and regional level. Impacts would exceed regulatory standards. Mitigation measures to offset the adverse effects would be required to reduce impacts, though long-term changes to the resource would be expected.

Alternative 1- No Action Alternative

The No Action alternative will not impact the existing environment, as no site preparation or construction would occur for temporary emergency housing purposes. This alternative would preclude the federal government from adequately addressing the urgency of providing temporary and transient emergency housing. Consequently, displaced disaster victims would have to remain in the temporary housing they have acquired through their own resources and possibly far from the original homes. The short and long term recovery of flood victims and their communities would be further compounded by fewer housing options. They would continue to suffer social and economic stresses related to the disaster recovery.

Table 1. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences Matrix.

Resource Area	Impact Intensity				Impact Summary	Agency Coordination / Permits	Mitigation
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major			
Geology and Soils	X				Potential for localized increase in soil erosion during construction. (See water quality section)	Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES) storm water construction permit to be obtained by construction contractor.	Implement construction Best Management Practices (BMPs). Install silt fences/straw bales to reduce sedimentation. Area soils will be wetted during construction to minimize wind erosion. If fill is stored on site, the contractor would be required to cover it appropriately.
Hydrology and Floodplains (Executive Order 11988)	X				Project area is located in a 500-year floodplain per the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map Zone B, Community Panel No. 115. No impacts anticipated.	Coordination with the parish floodplain administrator to ensure compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as administered in the local floodplain ordinance including issuance of appropriate permitting. To be coordinated by construction contractor.	
Wetlands (Executive Order 11990)	X				No wetlands were observed at the project site during the site reconnaissance. No wetlands were shown on the USFWS National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps. No impacts anticipated.		
Coastal Zone Management	X				Project site is not located within the boundaries of the Coastal Zone. No impacts to the Louisiana Coastal Zone anticipated.	Communication with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on 9/21/05. Project would be compatible with the general consistency authorization agreement. Joint permit not required.	

Resource Area	Impact Intensity				Impact Summary	Agency Coordination / Permits	Mitigation
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major			
Water Quality	X				Potential for localized increase in sedimentation during construction. Potential impact to water quality in downstream swales, ditches, and streams (e.g., turbidity, siltation, biological oxygen demand).	LAPDES storm water construction permits to be obtained by construction contractor.	Contractor to implement requirements of LAPDES storm water construction permit. Implement construction Best Management Practices, i.e., install silt fences, straw bales, etc. to reduce sedimentation. If fill is stored on site, the contractor would be required to cover it appropriately.
Air Quality	X				Negligible impact would be anticipated from vehicle exhaust emissions and increased dust during construction. Federal and state air quality attainment levels would not be exceeded.	EPA Region 6 designation.	Area soils would be covered and/or wetted during construction to minimize dust.
Vegetation and Wildlife	X				The project site contains trees that will be removed for the placement of the travel trailers. Informal consultation with state and federal resource agencies regarding restoration of the site following the temporary housing need will ensure that the project does not adversely impact regional species diversity. Impacts to natural resources are expected to be negligible.		Once the temporary housing need has ended, the site would be seeded and restored to previous conditions to the extent practical and/or used by the landowner in a manner consistent with local zoning. This may include a requirement to use native species to re-vegetate the site
Threatened and Endangered Species (Endangered Species Act, Section 7)	X				No threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat occurs at the site. No effect to threatened or endangered species or their habitat.	USFWS blanket consultation letter dated September 27, 2005	
Cultural Resources (National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106)	X				FEMA has determined that there are no National Register listed historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect (APE).	SHPO concurrence letter February 3, 2006.	
Socioeconomics		X			Park occupancy is expected to be about 218 people (87 units x estimated 2.5 people per unit) maximum. It is expected the Park residents are currently displaced residents of Orleans Parish. See Section F.	On February 3, 2006 the Parish issued a formal letter of no objection for the establishment of the E.H. Burton temporary group housing site.	

Resource Area	Impact Intensity				Impact Summary	Agency Coordination / Permits	Mitigation
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major			
Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)	X				FEMA disaster housing assistance is available to any affected household that meets the conditions of eligibility and demographics are not among the eligibility requirements. The demographic makeup of the future park residents is expected to be similar to the community as a whole. The percent populations of zip code 70127 are: 85.6% African American, 11.3% Caucasian, 1.6% Hispanic or Latino, and 1.5% other. 15.3 % of families are below poverty level in this area. The proposed action is not expected to pose disproportionately high and adverse public health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. See Section F.		
Noise	X				During the construction period residents immediately adjacent to the project site would experience an increase in noise levels. Due to the urgency of the situation, construction may occur on a 24-hour schedule until the Park is completed. Construction noise impacts would be short-term and limited to the duration of construction activities. The vehicles from Park occupants would also increase the level of vehicular noise in the area.		If necessary, the following noise reduction measures should be considered: (1) restricting the 24-hour schedule to the first two weeks of construction; (2) using a 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. construction schedule; (3) completing construction closest to adjoining residents first; and (4) completing noisier activities during the day if a 24-hour schedule is used.
Safety and Security	X				No concerns anticipated.		The contractor would post appropriate signage and fencing to minimize potential adverse public safety concerns, including placing fencing around the site perimeter. Appropriate signage and barriers should be in place prior to construction activities in order to alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities and traffic pattern changes.

Resource Area	Impact Intensity				Impact Summary	Agency Coordination / Permits	Mitigation
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major			
Hazardous Materials and Toxic Wastes		X			A search of hazardous materials databases was completed on 1/30/06. One UST/AST and 4 RCRA generators were found within a ¼ of a mile the E.H. Burton Property. Sediment tests were also performed nearby. See Section F. No impacts anticipated.	First Search, LDEQ, Oil/Gas and Wells, and Brownfield lists were searched in order to determine the presence of hazardous materials onsite.	
Traffic and Transportation	X				Traffic volumes on the local road network in the project area would increase during Park construction and occupancy. The existing infrastructure would be able to accommodate these increases without impacting local traffic.		

F. Additional Impact Analysis

Socioeconomics

The project site is located in the 70127 zip code of Orleans Parish. According to the 2000 Census, zip code 70127 had 31,635 residents, and 12,413 housing units. The population for zip code 70127 was 85.6% black or African American, 11.3% white, 1.6% Hispanic or Latino and 1.5% other. The median household income for 1999 was \$30,954, and 15.3% of families were living below the poverty level (Census 2000).

With the establishment of the Park, up to approximately 218 residents would be temporarily relocating to the project area (87 units x estimated 2.5 people per unit), although some of these potential residents may be residents of the area currently displaced from their homes. The local community is aware of this action and would experience an increase in the need for public services, such as schools, fire and police services, child care, and medical services. However, the demand for public and commercial services is not expected to be greater than the pre-hurricane demand and potential impacts would be minimal.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes

A negligible amount of residual flood sediment was noted on site during recent site visit. No other environmental conditions; such as distressed vegetation or historical soil contamination were observed.

A search of hazardous materials databases was completed January 28, 2006. Four (4) Resource Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA) generators and one Underground Storage Tank (UST) was found within a ¼ a mile of the site. The listed UST was not found to be leaking and is permanently out of use. All four generators are listed as categorically exempt due to the minor amount of waste they produce per month.

On September 15, 2005, EPA collected and analyzed sediments samples directly across from the proposed site, along Chef Menteur Highway. The EPA sediment sampling report entitled "FLOODWATER: Sediment Chemical Testing Results for 9338: September 15, 2005" shows elevated levels of arsenic, chromium, Dieldrin (an EPA banned pesticide), and petroleum fuel constituents. The Risk Evaluation/Corrective Action Program (RECAP) value for arsenic, chromium, Dieldrin, and petroleum fuel constituents are 12,000 ppb, 23,000 ppb, 30 ppb, and 65,000 ppb respectively. EPA testing results reported values over the RECAP limit for arsenic at 18,500 ppb, chromium at 23,900 ppb, Dieldrin at 39 ppb, and petroleum fuel constituents at 1,050,000 ppb.. According to the results of the EPA report "The levels of metals detected were below levels that would be expected to produce adverse health effects." From comments made by the EPA, this recognized environmental condition is not anticipated to have an impact on the proposed temporary housing park.

G. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are defined as environmental effects that are greater in magnitude, extent, or duration than the direct and indirect effects of the proposed FEMA-associated action when combined with the effects of other current and future actions, regardless of the proponent. Given the Proposed Action, temporary long-term cumulative affects are not anticipated.

H. Public Involvement

Public involvement is being performed in compliance with NEPA, FEMA's regulations implementing NEPA at 44 CFR 10.9(c), and Executive Orders 12898, 11988, and 11990. A Public Notice will be published in *Times Picayune* beginning on March 10, 2006. Due to the emergency nature of this action, the public comment period will be brief, from March 10, 2006 thru March 12, 2006. Written comments on the DEA and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be faxed to FEMA's Joint Field Office in Baton Rouge at (225) 346-5848. Verbal comments are being accepted at (225) 376-5137, and TTY for hearing or speech-impaired at (800) 462-7585; between 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. The Draft DEA and FONSI are available for public review at FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers located at 2128 Franklin Avenue, 219 Loyola Avenue, 11700 Chef Menteur HWY,

New Orleans, and the Main Library, 219 Loyola Avenue. The DRC hours are 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Saturday. The DEA and FONSI are also available for viewing and download from FEMA's website at <http://www.fema.gov/ehp/docs.shtm>.

I. Conclusion

To provide temporary emergency disaster housing for people displaced by Hurricane Katrina in Southeast Louisiana, FEMA is proposing to construct temporary emergency disaster housing for the city of New Orleans. The numbers of displaced people and applications for individual assistance emphasizes the critical need for emergency housing. The need for the proposed action is to provide a mechanism to ensure compliance with applicable local, state and federal environmental laws and regulations to support the timely and effective provision of temporary and transient emergency housing for disaster victims, which minimizing the potential for adverse environmental impacts.

This DEA was written to evaluate the potential impacts to the environment due to the site alternatives. The attached Record of Environmental Review (REC) addresses the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management), 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), and 12898 (Environmental Justice), and various hazardous and toxic waste regulations and will ensure compliance with these identified federal environmental laws, regulations, and Executive Orders by reviewing and assessing the potential site and documenting the results. Findings of this DEA indicate that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for this action.

If no substantive comments are received relative to the proposed action's environmental effects, the Draft DEA and FONSI will become final and the initial Public Notice will also serve as the final Public Notice. Substantive comments will be addressed as appropriate in the Final documents.

J. References

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Figure 1. Geographic Location

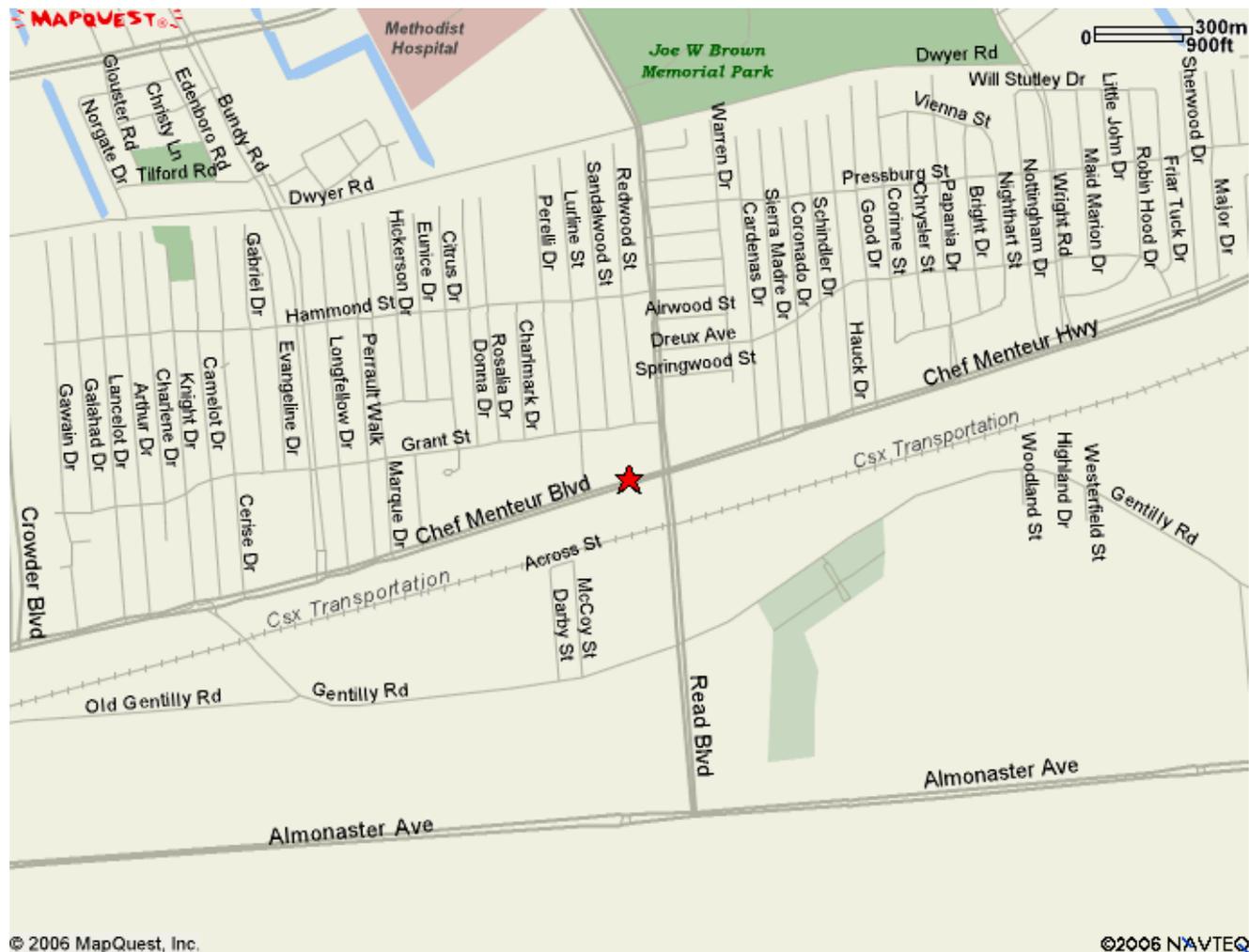


Figure 2. Photographs





Figure 3. Preliminary Site Design

