



FEMA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Alternative Housing Pilot Program Ephesus Group Housing Site, Westwego, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana

Background

Recognizing the extensive and complex housing challenges facing victims and communities as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and acknowledging the limitations on the Federal Emergency Management Association's (FEMA) ordinary statutory authority to provide non-temporary housing solutions, Congress appropriated funds to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to support alternative housing pilot programs (Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2006, Public Law [PL] 109-234).

The Alternative Housing Pilot Program (AHPP) represents a one-time exception to FEMA's existing authority under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), which binds FEMA to a temporary housing mission, by providing an opportunity to explore, implement, and evaluate innovative approaches to housing solutions, and to address ongoing housing challenges created by the 2005 hurricane season in the states of the Gulf Coast region, including the State of Louisiana, especially in the southernmost parishes such as Jefferson Parish. The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) has applied for FEMA funding under the AHPP to provide permanent housing solutions for eligible applicant families displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The LRA proposes the construction of the Ephesus Group Housing Site, which would be comprised of 30 single-family AHPP units (Louisiana Cottages) on a 3.0-acre site at the 800 block of Wayne Avenue in Westwego, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. According to the preliminary digital flood insurance rate maps (DFIRM), the proposed project site is location within the 100-year floodplain (Flood Zone AE). The proposed action would include the elevation of the units to the advisory base flood elevation (ABFE), the installation of infrastructure onsite to provide access and municipal utilities to each home site, and site preparation including any removal of vegetation, grubbing, filling, contouring and grading that may be required for each home site.

In accordance with the Stafford Act, PL 93-288, as amended, and implementing regulations at 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 206, FEMA is required to review the environmental effects of the proposed action prior to making a funding decision.

During FEMA's evaluation of the proposed action, it was identified that the Louisiana Office of Community Development (OCD), prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) regulations, 24 CFR 58, that analyzed the impacts of the construction of a senior housing development (54 units) on the proposed site. As the Responsible Entity for the CDBG funds, the State of Louisiana's OCD certified that that the environmental review, decision-making, and action was fully carried out and compliant with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the environmental procedures, permit requirements, and statutory obligations of the laws cited in 24 CFR 58.5, and also agreed to comply with authorities in 24 CFR 58.6 and applicable state and local laws. OCD determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was not required for the action and that the level of review determination was an EA per 24 CFR 58.36. The U.S. Housing and Urban Development Form 7015.15 and Proof of Publication for a Finding of No Significant Impact/Notice of Intent to Request Funds or (FONSI/NOIRRF) was completed and signed on December 26, 2007.

The OCD EA stated that the proposed action would have no adverse effects to archaeological sites or historic properties, wetlands, threatened and endangered species or their habitats, water resources, farmlands, hazardous and radioactive materials. The proposed action would have temporary noise impacts to nearby communities. There would be impacts to floodplains, but there would be no practicable alternative to this action. OCD also stated that there would be positive benefits to low-and moderate-income persons and minorities.

Adoption

FEMA has conducted an evaluation of the LRA's proposed action and an independent review of the findings of the OCD EA. FEMA has determined that the proposed action under the AHPP is substantially the same in scope of OCD's proposed action and would have the same impacts as those described in the OCD EA. Although the purpose and need of the proposed actions differ slightly (housing for the elderly vs. housing for disaster victims), their nature (*i.e.* to provide housing) and environmental impacts are substantially the same. Therefore, in accordance with

40 CFR 1506.3 and Council on Environmental Quality Guidance, FEMA is adopting the OCD EA. The OCD EA is incorporated to this FONSI by reference.

Conditions

The LRA shall comply with all prescribed conditions set forth in the OCD EA, including but not limited to the following conditions.

1. To minimize noise impacts to nearby sensitive noise receptors, construction activity will be limited to daylight hours until construction is complete.
2. Flood insurance under the National Flood Insurance Program will be obtained and maintained for the economic life of the project.

In addition, FEMA prescribes the following conditions in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and Executive Order (EO) 11988, respectively.

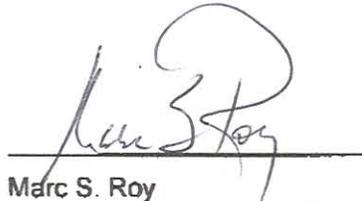
1. In the event that archaeological deposits, including but not limited to any Native American pottery, stone tools, historic artifacts or human remains, are uncovered, project activities would be halted. The contractor would stop all work immediately in the vicinity of the discovery and take reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. All archaeological findings would be secured and access to the sensitive area restricted. The contractor would inform FEMA immediately and FEMA would consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and interested tribes. Work in sensitive areas would not resume until consultation is completed and appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that the project is in compliance with the NHPA. As a result no impacts to cultural resources would be expected.
2. The AHPP cottages would be constructed on piers and should be elevated above the ABFE.
3. Prior to construction, FEMA shall initiate a 15-day comment period providing final notification to the public of the intent to carryout the proposed action in the floodplain.

Any changes to this approved scope of work will require submission to, and evaluation and approval by FEMA prior to initiation of any work, for compliance with NEPA. The applicant is

required to obtain and comply with all local, state, and Federal permits and requirements. Non-compliance with the requirements noted above may jeopardize the receipt of Federal funding.

Findings

Based on input and consultations with Federal and state resources agencies, and other identified sources documented in the OCD EA, and in accordance with FEMA regulations (44 CFR Part 10) for environmental considerations, and EO 11988 (Floodplains), EO 11990 (Wetlands), and EO 12898 (Environmental Justice), FEMA has found that the proposed action with the prescribed mitigations measures as defined in the OCD EA and identified above will have no significant impact on the natural and human environmental. Therefore, an EIS will not be prepared, and the proposed project with prescribed conditions may proceed. If a change in the scope of work occurs, the LRA and FEMA must be notified to evaluate if the proposed change would alter the potential impacts on the environment.



Marc S. Roy
Environmental Liaison Officer
Louisiana Transitional Recovery Office
FEMA-1603/1607-DR-LA

3/16/09
Date



Tony Russell
Director Field Office New Orleans
Louisiana Transitional Recovery Office
FEMA-1603/1607-DR-LA

3/17/09
Date



Jomar Maldonado
Acting Environmental Officer
Office of Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation
FEMA/Mitigation Directorate

3/16/09
Date