



FEMA

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Louisiana Recovery Office
1 Seine Court
New Orleans, Louisiana 70114

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF NEW ORLEANS
ST. BERNARD PHASE III
ORLEANS PARISH, LOUISIANA

BACKGROUND

On August 29, 2005, the floods, heavy rain, and high velocity winds from Hurricane Katrina caused extensive damage to the LA1-08, St. Bernard, low-income public housing development owned by the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO). The St. Bernard Housing Development site, is located in the Gentilly neighborhood of the Seventh Ward. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved the demolition of the buildings at the St. Bernard Development on September 21, 2007. Demolition began in February 2008 and all of the buildings were demolished by July 2008. Final site cleanup was completed in October 2008.

HANO has determined that the St. Bernard site is the best possible location to consolidate many of its damaged scattered residential units. The proposed action is the third phase of redevelopment of the St. Bernard property, also known as St. Bernard III or Columbia Parc Senior Residences. It would construct a 120 unit independent living facility for low-income seniors on the city block bounded by Senate, Duplessis, Caton and Jumonville Streets. This facility will provide much-needed additional living opportunities for low-income seniors through project-based Section 8 rental vouchers. The new construction will include 114 one-bedroom, one-bath and 6 two-bedroom, two-bath housing units. The one-bedroom units will be about 721-742 square feet and the two-bedroom units will be about 986 square feet. The 6 two-bedroom units will be reserved for elderly residents that require a live-in aide or caretaker. Approximately twelve units will be reserved for physically disabled residents and those that have a visual and/or hearing disability. The project budget is being funded from HUD Section 901 and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) dollars.

In accordance with the environmental review guidelines of the Council of Environmental Quality found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, and with the use of the implementing environmental review procedures of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found at 40 CFR Part 6, entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy Act" as guidance, the HUD performed an environmental review and prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA). The purpose of the EA was to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with the redevelopment of residential housing on the subject property and to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The proposed action is to provide needed replacement housing for low-income senior residents for the City of New Orleans.

The alternatives considered were 1) No Action, 2) Construction of 120 housing units for seniors (Proposed Action), and 3) Construction of 120 housing units for seniors at a location outside the special flood hazard area.

COORDINATION, PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

In preparation of the EA, the HUD coordinated with federal and state agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State Historic Preservation Office, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the local floodplain administrator. A public hearing for the proposed project was conducted to inform the public of the proposed project, to identify any issues of concern, and to request public participation in the development of the project. No adverse public comments or concerns were received either in person or in writing.

FEMA'S INVOLVEMENT

The applicant, the Housing Authority of New Orleans, has requested Public Assistance funding under Section 406 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, PL-93-288, as amended, and implementing regulations at 44 CFR Part 206 for this project. FEMA has conducted a review of the HUD's Environmental Assessment and has adopted it pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's Implementing Procedures for NEPA at 40 CFR 1506.3.

FINDINGS

FEMA has made the following determinations from the information contained in the HUD EA:

The proposed project will not result in any significant adverse impact to existing land use, water resources (surface water, groundwater, Waters of the United States, wetlands and floodplains), coastal resources, biological resources (vegetation, fish and wildlife, state and federally-listed threatened or endangered species and critical habitats), cultural resources, air quality, noise, traffic, safety, hazardous materials or result in disproportionately high or adverse effects to minority or low-income populations. The proposed action is also in compliance with all relevant federal, state, and local laws, including Executive Orders (EO) 11988 (Floodplain Management), EO 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), and EO 12898 (Environmental Justice). FEMA has determined that the proposed project qualifies as a major federal action that will not significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment, nor does it have the potential for significant cumulative effects. As a result of this FONSI, an EIS will not be prepared (44 CFR Part 10.9) and the proposed project as described in the attached EA may proceed.

CONDITIONS

The following conditions must be met as part of the implementation of the project. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize federal funds:

- This FONSI applies only to the project area that has been specifically described and evaluated in the HUD EA. If there is a change in the scope of work, or if any other areas outside the project area described in the HUD EA will be impacted, the project must be re-evaluated for compliance with NEPA and other applicable federal, state, and local environmental and historic preservation laws, regulations, and Executive Orders.
- If during the course of work, archaeological artifacts (prehistoric or historic) or human remains are discovered, the applicant shall stop work in the vicinity of the discovery and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. The applicant shall inform their Public Assistance contacts at FEMA, who will in turn contact FEMA Historic Preservation (HP) staff. The applicant will not proceed with work until FEMA HP completes consultation with the SHPO. In addition, if unmarked graves are present, compliance with the Louisiana Unmarked Human Burial Sites Preservation Act (R.S. 8:671 et seq.) is required. The applicant shall notify the law enforcement agency of the jurisdiction where the remains are located within twenty-four hours of the discovery. The applicant shall also notify FEMA and the Louisiana Division of Archaeology at 225-342-8170 within seventy-two hours of the discovery. Failure to comply with these stipulations may jeopardize receipt of FEMA funding.
- Unusable equipment, debris and material shall be disposed of in an approved manner and location. In the event significant items (or evidence thereof) are discovered during implementation of the project applicant shall handle, manage, and dispose of petroleum products, hazardous materials and/or toxic waste in accordance to the requirements and to the satisfaction of the governing local, state and federal agencies.
- The applicant is responsible for acquiring any necessary permits prior to commencing construction at the proposed project site in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.
- These conditions, contained in the HUD EA, shall be adhered to as a condition of this FONSI:
 - That all newly constructed buildings must be built at an elevation three feet higher than its present elevation according to the April 2006 FEMA Recovery Guidance publication to remove the structures from future flooding.
 - That HUD and HANO comply with the stipulations listed in the Section 106 Historic Preservation Memorandum of Agreement.

APPROVAL

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FEMA-1603/1607-DR-LA

Date

Joseph Threat
Acting Executive Director
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Date