

**PUBLIC NOTICE  
FEMA NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
CONSTRUCTION AND HARDENING OF THE WELCOME PARK  
COMMUNITY CENTER AND SAFE ROOM PROJECT  
WEST BANK, ST. JAMES PARISH, LOUISIANA**

Interested parties are hereby notified that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of the EA and FONSI is to assess the effects on the human and natural environment from the proposed "hardening" of the to-be-constructed Welcome Park Community Center and the construction of two interior tornado safe rooms within the new community center to accommodate 190 essential St. James Parish personnel and at risk population on the West Bank of St. James Parish, LA, a proposed action for which FEMA is considering providing funding assistance.

The draft EA evaluates a No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action stated above. The FONSI will be FEMA's finding that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human and natural environment, if no additional substantive information is discovered during the public review and comment period.

The proposed hardened Welcome Park Community Center with two interior safe rooms would be constructed on public property with minimum elevation of 18.0 feet above mean sea level (msl), which is 4 feet above the highest Base Flood Elevation (BFE) of 14 feet above msl indicated on any of the St. James Parish Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs). The proposed Welcome Park Community Center, which would be an approximate 12,000 SF building according to construction plans provided by St. James Parish, would be constructed at 7248 Park Street, St. James, Louisiana (30.046556, -90.851331) on the West Bank of the Mississippi River, just west of LA Highway 18. The proposed project site is located on a public park complex which includes a picnic pavilion, a basketball court, a pond, and a jogging trail. The proposed Welcome Park Community Center site is located southwest of the existing Community Center/Senior Citizens Center/Sheriff's Office building.

A draft EA evaluates the proposed action's potential impacts on the human and natural environment. It summarizes the purpose and need, affected environment, and potential environmental consequences associated with the proposed action and alternatives.

The draft EA and draft FONSI are available for review at the St. James Public Library (Vacherie Branch), 2593 Highway 20, Vacherie, LA 70090, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday; 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Friday; and 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Saturday. The documents can be downloaded from FEMA's website at [www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/ea-region6.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/ea-region6.shtm). After the comment period has closed, and for documents from previous years, EAs will be moved to the archives page at [http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/archives\\_index.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/archives_index.shtm). The comment period will begin February 27, 2012 and will end March 17, 2012 at 4 pm. Comments may be mailed to: DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY--FEMA E/HP--Construction and Hardening of the St. James Parish West Bank Welcome Park Community Center and Safe Room Project, 1 Seine Court, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, New Orleans, LA 70114. Comments may be emailed to: FEMA-NOMA@dhs.gov or faxed to: 504-762-2323. Verbal comments will be accepted or recorded at 504-762-2205. If no substantive comments are received, the draft EA and associated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will become final and this initial Public Notice will also serve as the final Public Notice for work in the floodplain in accordance with 44 CFR Part 9.12.