

Dear Member of FoCHAT,

## **What Are Some Of The Things CHAT Is Involved In Now?**

1. We met for almost an hour and a half with three legislators and LRA Executive Director Paul Rainwater about SB 755, now a law, and related issues of fixing ICF shortchanging mistakes. There were hopeful discussions, and we will probably have a follow-up meeting very soon. We continue to be in email discussions with LRA staff. We have a long list of items in pending public records requests from LRA that we are about to follow up for a timely substantive response.
  2. We are working on a new initiative with LouisianaREBUILDS. Stay tuned for announcements this week.
  3. KC King and Melanie Ehrlich have affidavits in a still pending class action court case whose main lawyer is Frank Silvestri with two litigants (all from core CHAT). This case is about applicants being able to go to court to get relief from Road Home mistakes (contrary to what it says in the closing documents) and also not having to pay ICF International's and the state's lawyers' fees if the applicant loses.
  4. Our 2-hour June 16 CHAT meeting will be shown on COX10 every day for a week starting Sunday. Thanks again to George Blow and COX10. Many thanks also to UNO who graciously hosts our meetings. See our website <http://chatushome.com> for the schedule of televised showings of the meeting.
  5. We have begun working with PolicyLink, a nonprofit national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity <http://www.policylink.org/> on Road Home issues. Among the accomplishments of the Louisiana branch of PolicyLink is instrumental work in setting up the great free online resources of <http://LouisianaREBUILDS.info>.
  6. We have begun working with a law student for analysis of our survey data for the purposes of more effective advocacy. Of course, all ID's, names, and personal information will be kept confidential.
  7. Ricardo Gutierrez and Steve Donahue represented CHAT at the last NORA Board Meeting. Steve also represented CHAT at the last LLT board meeting (Louisiana Land Trust, Road Home properties). Donald Vallee, new member of the LLT Board, kindly presented CHAT concerns to the LLT Board. They came from a discussion at a recent CHAT meeting.
1. Meaningful consultation with the relevant planning districts and neighborhoods in NOLA and with appropriate other local citizen groups elsewhere in the state when decisions are made about how to distribute LLT property in a district/neighborhood or (outside NOLA) city or parish. In other words, meaningful district representation for all decisions about the fate of LLT property in that district. This needs to involve setting up the structure for who represents the districts and publicizing this before it is finalized.

There is much pressure on land use decisions from outside of the neighborhoods where that LLT land resides because of financial interests and desire to unload the land from the municipal responsibilities of upkeep.

We fear railroading to disburse property with token meetings, not conveniently arranged with sufficient and broadly disseminated (posting at road2la.org, neighborhood yahoo groups, CHAT, GNOFairHousing, and LouisianaREBUILDS etc.) notice or with talking to these groups but not really taking their opinions about what to do in their own neighborhoods into account. LRA does not have a good track record for sufficient notice with more than minimal timing of the notice to meet the requirements of the law (1 day).

Bypassing local citizen involvement seems to have started already with the way the soft second mortgage proposal summarily passed.

There are guidelines for neighborhood involvement in the LLT proposal approved by the LRA Board after major changes were introduced by neighborhood groups. Will they be followed?

2. Selling the land as close as possible to fair market value so as not to depress the local housing market and offering the land first to adjacent neighbors.
3. Getting the land moved to the municipalities so that the properties do not sit longer than necessary in derelict condition.
4. Following the RH legislation's stipulation that any money made on land sales beyond the needs for upkeep and distribution go back into RH grant fund as long as the grant program is still in operation.

### **Two Emails of Note From a New Orleans Yahoo Group:**

A. I recently learned that the SBA filed a mortgage against our house in an incorrect amount. After the hurricane, I eventually ended up borrowing a lesser amount from the SBA than had originally been approved. However, the SBA filed a mortgage against our house for the higher amount.

Anyone who borrowed from the SBA may want to check for accuracy the papers the SBA filed against your property in the conveyance office.

B. My name is Donna Lawrence and I am the Executive Director of the Riggio Foundation in New York City. We have started an exciting project in New Orleans called Project Home Again (PHA). Through PHA we are building homes in New Orleans for people who lost their homes as a result of Katrina. These beautiful homes are being offered at no cost to eligible families who are willing to swap their damaged homes or vacant lots in Gentilly, that will then be used to build homes for other families from the community.

Our first 20 homes are being built on the corner of St. Bernard Avenue and Mandolin Street in Gentilly. *We are still recruiting families for these homes --- families who owned a home and lived in Gentilly prior to the storm and want to return to this wonderful neighborhood.*

If you are interested or know of anybody who might be, please have them contact me at [dlawrence@riggiofoundation.org](mailto:dlawrence@riggiofoundation.org)

Also, please check out our website at [www.projecthomeagain.net](http://www.projecthomeagain.net) for more information and to see pictures of the homes.

Thank you!

Donna Lawrence

### **CHAT SubGroups and Tales From Applicants**

- **JOIN A CHAT SUBGROUP (AND TELL OTHERS IN THE SAME WAGON) IF YOU ARE WAITING FOR A GRANT BECAUSE YOU SOLD AT A LOSS OR IF YOU HAVE RH**

## CONDOMINIUM PROBLEMS

### **Sold-at-a-Loss- New CHAT Subgroup Available For Joining**

**From one of our members.** If you sold your Hurricane Katrina/Rita-destroyed home to a private party at a loss and were encouraged to apply for RH money but received a letter in January saying you would probably get nothing, you should know that you are a member of a class of more than 4800 people who are in the same situation.

Walter Vetsch [wvetsch@juno.com](mailto:wvetsch@juno.com) just formed a yahoo chatgroup for any of you or your friends who is a RH applicant in the category of sold-at-a-loss in 2006; none of these applicants have yet had a commitment to have their grant funded even though applicants who sold their home to private persons after closing following RH procedures can have their full grant.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/4800strong>

### **Group To Work on Condo Regressive Rule Changes**

Gov. Jindal-era changes in condominium policies have reduced grants of some applicants from \$150,000 to zero. To join this subgroup, write to

[jefferymorgan@aol.com](mailto:jefferymorgan@aol.com)

- **If You Need Help With Road Home, Below Are Free Services Available To You**
  1. **504-301-3112 (For outside New Orleans: 1-888-409-3557) Acorn Housing for help with Your Road Home process or Option Letters, Closing Papers, or mortgage problems**
  2. **Call Loyola University and ask for the Law Clinic for appeals help for low-income applicants # 504 861-5596**
  3. **504-301-3112 (For outside New Orleans: 1-888-409-3557) Acorn Housing for help with credit counseling or home repair loans**
  4. **(504) 529-1000, ext. 242 New Orleans Legal Assistance for low income people, including help with appeals, [www.nolac.org](http://www.nolac.org). Qualifications for free help are described at [www.lawhelp.org/LA](http://www.lawhelp.org/LA)**
  
- **IF YOU ARE JUST SO FRUSTRATED OR ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES WHO IS ENTIRELY SATISFIED, CONSIDERING SENDING CHAT YOUR RH STORY**

You can write as little or as much as you like. Just tell us if you want it kept anonymous or don't even want it sent anywhere other than to the Executive Board Members of CHAT.

Send to [chatlra@yahoo.com](mailto:chatlra@yahoo.com) Make the subject: Road Home Tale

Best wishes,

Melanie Ehrlich  
Co-Chairman, CHAT