

Dear Concerned Citizens,

1. Road Home Rules

From a very recent LRA communication:

"It is the policy of the Road Home to use the highest valid home valuation in a homeowner's file generated by the Road Home program."

Yet, from another very recent LRA communication, it will cost "a minimum of \$500 million" to correct mistakes in implementing this policy.

2. Elevation Grant Request Forms – LRA writes "*Road Home* applicants must return their forms indicating interest in both *The Road Home* Elevation Incentive and the HMGP Elevation Award by June 16, 2008, or they will not receive funds to raise their homes."

We at CHAT have learned of ICF International losing the elevation grant request forms so make sure (in writing or in an email) that they received yours. At least some postcards acknowledging receipt have already been sent. If you are not sure that yours was received, you could send it again and write that this is a duplicate because you could not confirm receipt of the original.

You can download a sample form to use as a duplicate at:

http://road2la.org/Docs/Elevation%20Letter_SAMPLE.pdf

3. Serving the Public's Interest?: The Beginnings of Road Home Property Dispersal

There is a new LRA Action Plan Amendment proposing setting aside "\$75 million from the Small Rental funds for a special initiative designed to promote homeownership and to expand housing opportunities for existing low and moderate income renter households, using the supply of properties sold to the state through the Road Home program and held by the Louisiana Land Trust (LLT).

Under the program, qualified developers, including nonprofit and for-profit entities, will bid on selected LLT properties, which will be rehabilitated. Upon completion the properties will be sold at a "market price" set at the full cost of development, but the actual cost to the qualified first time homebuyers will be significantly less. The difference - or gap - will be provided in the form of a no interest, "soft second" mortgage to the purchaser.

The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) Board of Directors is expected to consider preliminary approval of the action plan amendment at its next meeting, scheduled for June 10 in Baton Rouge."

DOES THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE CONSTITUTE THE KIND OF NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT THAT WAS MANDATED FOR DECISIONS ABOUT ROAD HOME (LLT) PROPERTIES?

IS THIS ANOTHER INSTANCE OF LRA SATISFYING BUSINESS INTERESTS ABOVE THE COMMON WELFARE THAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO PROTECT?

Just two of numerous Road Home examples follow.

1. The Road Home contractor, ICF International, was supposed to rapidly distribute the easily calculated elevation incentives starting in April. It was supposed to be part of their contract. Instead, apparently another company gets to eat into Road Home grant money and dispersion of those grants other than to a tiny number of applicants has been delayed until well into the summer. Anyway, the \$1.2 billion of FEMA hazard mitigation funds that was supposed to take care of all of this hazard mitigation for Road Home applicants has shrunk to \$0.7 billion. Will yet more of it not go to Road Home applicants?

2. Has LRA ever finally decided whether ICF International deserves a fine for not meeting their Aug. 1, 2007 deadline for essentially no applications in Dispute Resolution for more than two months? The deadline for ICF proving that it made that deadline has been extended several times. Recently, ICF has been sending letters to applicants in Dispute Resolution for a year or even longer telling them their dispute was denied but, (SURPRISE!) contrary to Change Policy 189A, no details or explanation was given. Why won't LRA extend deadlines for applicants to appeal when so many storm victim applicants have been treated so unfairly by Road Home? This has led many to call Road Home their second victimization.

CAN WE EXPECT MORE OF THE SAME IF THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONS LET THIS ACTION PLAN BE APPROVED UNCHALLENGED?

"Citizens, community leaders and elected officials can access the plan and submit comments online at www.doa.louisiana.gov/cdbg/dractionplans.htm or request a copy by phone by calling (225) 219-9600."

If you want to comment online, go to www.doa.louisiana.gov/cdbg/dractionplans.htm

If you represent a neighborhood or district group, you can remind the LRA that by the LRA Board-approved rules, you were supposed to have meaningful public comment, not just the commitment to this on paper.

You can review the amendment

www.doa.louisiana.gov/cdbg/dractionplans.htm

and submit your comments via email to:

ocd@lra.gov ocd@la.gov

4. FEMA Trailers and Trailers on Home Lots Must Go While Road Home Applicants Languish Waiting For Funds and Rebuilding Sure Isn't A Matter of Three Months For Most

<http://www.nola.com/printer/printer.ssf?/base/library-149/12127309956570.xml&coll=1>

Trailers on private property must go
Expiring temporary-lodging order won't be extended
Friday, June 06, 2008
By Charlie Chapple
St. Tammany bureau

Almost three years after Hurricane Katrina, Brenda Ann Palmer-Butler still lives in a FEMA trailer near Bayou Lacombe, awaiting a Road Home grant to help rebuild her home, which was destroyed by storm surge.

"I've got my house plans done and I'm ready to rebuild," said the 51-year-old clerk-typist for the St. Tammany Parish School Board. But her application for a Road Home grant is still in limbo and under appeal, she said, forcing her to continue living in a Federal Emergency Management Agency trailer on her lot on Palmer Road, where her father once planted his vegetable garden.

She and more than 1,200 other St. Tammany Parish residents will have to find another place to live by Aug. 29, when the parish resumes enforcing codes that prohibit use of travel trailers as homes on private property.

<http://www.nola.com/timespic/stories/index.ssf?/base/news-11/1212729681268800.xml&coll=1>

A roof over family's head trumps curb appeal
Friday, June 06, 2008

On May 30, I and an unknown number of others received a trailer removal-deadline notice from the city's Safety and Permits Department that pre-Katrina zoning ordinances restricting the use of trailers and RVs would be strictly enforced starting July 1.

This is an Alice in Wonderland moment if ever there were one. ...
Although some have received Increased Cost of Compliance funds from the National Flood Insurance program, only 68 Louisianans have received Road Home Elevation funds, and no one has receive state HMPG funds, since the program has yet to be defined.

Now we're told that curb appeal is a higher priority than rebuilding, and we had better get rid of our "trailer trash" to look good.

City leaders need to drive by devastated neighborhoods and ask what they can do to help rather than harass returnees.

Konrad C. King
New Orleans

5. Progress Deserving Congratulation While Many Thousands Are Ignored Or Delayed In Getting Grants and Grant Corrections?

In a long self-congratulatory progress report about the LRA, the Road Home Homeowner Assistance Grant Program, clearly the largest single LRA program, was relegated to two sentences about the number of grants closed plus a single paragraph quoting Walter Leger, Chairman, LRA Housing Task Force.

<http://www.lra.louisiana.gov/assets/quarterlyreport/April2008QtReport.pdf>

Unmentioned in the progress report are fixes for:

the poor quality of many thousands of those grant closings,
the high error rate in grant calculation by the contractor ICF,
the use of different policies and formulas by LRA for grant calculation at different times,
the fact that applicants continue to report that they are pressured to close on their grant and forced to wait to resolve shortchanging mistakes until after closing,
funding of applicants who were encouraged to apply even though they had to sell at a loss in 2006,
the re-examination of selected applicants' data with more restrictive rules after closing and asking for paybacks,
and the exclusion of previous applicants who never had a fair chance to appeal from the new LRA appeal procedures.

Also unmentioned are the backroom methods very recently used by LRA to derail SB 740, which could have largely corrected many of these problems. SB 740, the Road Home Applicants' Bill of Rights, passed one Senate committee unanimously with five cosponsors but got derailed by an outrageously erroneous fiscal note (estimated price tag) derived from LRA data.

Best wishes,

Melanie Ehrlich

Co-Chairman, Citizens' Road Home Action Team

<http://chatushome.com>