

HOUSING STRATEGY WORK GROUP MEETING
OCTOBER 20, 2011
1:30 to 3:30 P.M.
RENAISSANCE CENTER 3RD FLOOR

Attendees: Dorothy Inman Johnson (Capital Area CAA), Wanda Carter (Leon County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee), J.B. Clark (Leon County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee), Lamarr Kemp (Leon County Director of Housing), Larry Strickland (Capital City Builders), Susan Poplin (Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department), Steve Hodges (Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department), Kevin Peters (Leon County Department of Emergency Management), Bryan Lowe (Florida Division of Emergency Management), Jacar McCloud (American Red Cross Tallahassee), Denise Imbler (Apalachee Regional Planning Council)

Introduction and Discussion of Scope

Denise Imbler with the Apalachee Regional Planning Council and the primary consultant for the development of the Leon County Post Disaster Redevelopment Plan, opened the meeting by having brief participant introductions and by providing a description of the PDRP and introducing the idea of a Housing Strategy. Ms. Imbler described the desire to have a brief document within the PDRP that establishes a housing framework for recovery and redevelopment. The plan would address uninsured, low-income residents. Currently, there is no housing strategy within the existing emergency response documents including the County Emergency Management and the Local Mitigation Strategy plans. Ms. Imbler recommended we create a stand-alone document. It was suggested that the Housing Strategy be an integrated plan containing components that will be consistent with other emergency management documents.

Dot Inman Johnson requested clarification since her agency primarily serves surrounding counties. The group discussed the application of the plan to surrounding counties. In previous disaster events her agency has been overwhelmed with clients needing assistive services. Emergency management staff at the meeting indicated that Leon County will play a host role providing shelter and in some cases, such as Katrina, more permanent housing as relocating individuals and families are integrated into the community.

With regard to Housing Strategy Workgroup it was suggested that the group include someone from the Homeless Shelter.

Purpose of the Housing Strategy Workgroup and Identification of Potential Housing Strategy Coordinator

Ms. Imbler requested the group to identify the purpose of the Housing Strategy plan. Group members discussed housing delivery and past experiences after Hurricane Katrina. Participants had a number of questions regarding the focus of the strategy and what types of items they should address. To better describe the types of activities the group referred to a chart on Page 27 of the Florida Division of Emergency Management's State Disaster Housing Planning, Local Disaster Housing Template, which identifies the types of activities and resources that would be associated with a PDRP housing strategy plan. The focus is on interim housing post disaster 90 days and up to 18 months, and long-term housing which is more than 18 months and would

continue through the impacts of the disaster. No specific recommendations were made at this point to define the purpose of the housing strategy plan.

Ms. Imbler also requested the group identify a Housing Coordinator by position and title. This person would be responsible for coordinating groups and activating the Housing Strategy in the event of a disaster. This person would probably be active as a member at the Disaster Recovery Center and participate on the Community Organizations Active In Disasters group. Ms. Imbler asked if Lamarr Kemp, Joyce Olavez and/or Ellen Meyi were appropriate choices for coordinator(s). Some discussion regarding County personnel and City personnel followed. Mr. Kemp indicated that his shop runs the County housing programs. Ms. Johnson commented that research and fact capacities were greater with the City staff. Also, Mr. Kemp commented the City receives entitlement funds resulting in annual program funding. Ms. Imbler indicated she would contact City staff regarding the potential for serving as a coordinator; and it may be appropriate that two joint coordinators from the City and County are identified.

Housing Task Force

Ms. Imbler recommended establishing a Housing Task Force as part of the plan. The Local Disaster Housing Template document also recommends using a task force in the event of activation. No comments were made regarding this recommendation.

Assessing Housing Demand and Supply Post Disaster

Ms. Imbler asked the group about identifying housing demand post disaster. Comments from Mr. Lowe were that usually the Red Cross assesses and it is not the same as a Damage Assessment post disaster. Ms. Imbler commented that a determination and identification of available rental properties will be a substantial role of the created Housing Task Force. Rental properties are identified within the first three days.

A question was asked regarding whether Housing folks should be at the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC). Mr. Lowe commented that they should be there.

Habitability Post Disaster

The question of when and how habitability was determined post disaster was brought up. One unclear area to work on is the permitting process relating to housing repair determination. The DRC (where local social services agencies that provide services to the populous are centered) will play a substantial role here. Governmental housing staff and American Red Cross should work with the DRC to determine habitability. Ms. Imbler asked if FEMA determined habitability through the “Blue Roof” program since they administer it. Mr. Lowe indicated he did not know but speculated that the habitability determination was made locally. It was suggested that perhaps someone from building codes should be included on the work group.

Outline of Actions

Ms. Johnson expressed that there needs to be a more structured approach to discussing the Housing Strategy plan. The group and topics seemed to be jumping around. Also, the group felt they didn't know enough of what each brought to the table in terms of resources and services, particularly the Red Cross which has a critical role. It was suggested that an outline of topic areas be developed to guide the group's discussions and deliberations. A description of

emergency, transitional and permanent disaster housing phases needs to be presented to the group. The Disaster Housing Template presents the phases in an easy to understand format and uses the state standards; the group is encouraged to review and use this information for context.

A suggestion was made to have a presentation or series of presentations at the next meeting.

Coordination with Other Emergency Management Efforts

The group discussed general client services and the need to ensure that services are tracked and coordinated. Ms. Inman described that her clients are involved in a number of programs. They coordinate their database system with local, state and federal programs to track clients and to ensure that clients are fully served and to ensure services are not duplicated. Mr. Peters recommended that this group be plugged into local emergency management coordination efforts. The Community Organizations Active In Disasters (COAD - coordinated by Volunteer Leon) would be a good place to discuss service management and coordination. He suggested that a representative from the group attend the November 14th meeting. May want to be on agenda to educate about Workgroups exist.

The group continued to discuss coordination and several participants recommended bringing in other organizations that are related including: DBPR (codes and standard), County and City code and building inspection staff, the Big Bend Homeless Coalition, and City Community Service Partnerships. Additional participants would not necessarily be expected to attend the meetings but would be engaged in an advisory capacity to provide input on certain topics.

The group also commented that we need a single, dedicated website as a part of the system created. This may be something that COAD could coordinate.

Returning to Topic of Purpose

Ms. Imbler asked the group, now that they had a chance to further discuss the issues associated with a housing strategy plan, to revisit the issue of purpose of the plan.

Ms. Poplin addressed the group indicating that what they had been describing in terms of services and coordination were: providing interim and/or permanent housing to those residents who need it [getting a roof over their heads]; addressing the needs associated with staying in that housing including social service needs; and providing those services in an efficient and coordinated manner. If the housing strategy addresses these issues then it will allow the community to meet its housing goals post disaster.

A purpose for the Disaster Housing Strategy was formed to state, "Provide interim and permanent housing, and human services in an efficient and coordinated manner to the community impacted by disaster."

Timeline and Outline

Requests were made to identify a timeline for completion of the housing strategy. Though no specific timeline was identified, Ms. Imbler indicated she was hoping to have something put together soon. Mr. Hodges explained that the PDRP plan was due to be completed by April but

that the housing strategy should be completed sooner. We would want to complete our work by March 2012. Grant deadline requires completion of PDRP by June 2012. Then we would plan to take the PDRP to the City and County Commissions for adoption by Resolution.

Ms. Imbler offered that if we did not want to create a detailed housing strategy at this time, we could summarize the resources in the housing strategy, identify a housing coordinator, and task force; and then commit to completing a larger housing strategy at a later time allowing for exploration of grant funds to do so.

Some discussion regarding the plan followed.

Ms. Poplin suggested that we may want to come up with an outline for group actions based on the Local Disaster Housing Template. That could provide a framework for the questions we want to ask and answer and the kinds of items we want to include in our plan [or not include]. An outline for the group will be provided at the next meeting.

Next Meeting, Next Steps and Other Items

The group discussed the next meeting and the need for more information. Participants requested a presentation or two on what stakeholders, current resources, and organizational systems exist relating to local disaster relief. One participant commented we need a flowchart of current disaster system for the workgroup to understand status quo. It was decided that the Red Cross would do a presentation on their services to the group.

It was requested that each agency participating provide a 1 or 2 page summary of what resources they would do in a disaster-scenario. This will facilitate determination of what the Workgroup will need to develop. The summary(ies) should be sent to Ms. Imbler at the ARPC. The group recommended Pat Holiday, CHSP, be contacted to provide input and possible help produce a summary of relevant agencies for involvement in disaster process.

The group also requested debris removal management and population re-entry management should be considered for inclusion in The Plan. Additionally, the plan should cover re-establishment of tax base in the event of a major catastrophe. Finally, the plan should explore ordinances to facilitate recovery and redevelopment; Tallahassee ordinance, "Emergency Waiver of Non-conforming Land Uses for Post-Disaster Temporary Accommodations," Ord. No. 06-O-65, was adopted in 2006.

The schedule for the next meeting:

1. Presentation from the Red Cross
2. Presentation of Program Information Summaries
3. Timeline for Completion of Housing Strategy Plan
4. Outline of Plan Considerations

Ms. Imbler agreed to provide potential meeting dates in November for the group's second meeting. The group adjourned at about 3:20 pm.