

St. Bernard Housing Transformation



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Public housing demolished to make way for new units (FOX 8 News)

A year and a half after the demolition of the St. Bernard Public Housing Development, there are new reminders of Katrina's profound impact on housing in New Orleans. The first phase of a mixed-income community like no other in the city is well on its way on the land at St. Bernard Avenue and Milton.

"We are well into the first phase of development, which is the first 466 units of mixed-income residential, which is a third public housing, a third low-income and a third market rate," said Gerry Barousse, Jr., chairman of the Bayou District Foundation, the non-profit group driving the new community.

Barousse said the community is designed to change the cycle of poverty. In addition to mixed-income rental units, the plan calls to acquire blighted neighborhood properties, re-develop them and make them affordable to low-income buyers. Inspired by an Atlanta, GA transformation of public housing, "Columbia Parc" in New Orleans will have a big focus on education. "We have an early learning facility for zero to five-year-olds that we're hoping to start this year. Then we're working to bring a k through 8 (kindegarten through 8th grade) facility on site and the Recovery School District is slotted to build a new high school near the bayou (Bayou St. John)," said Barousse.

The community will be complete with recreational facilities and commercial development, including a grocery store and other retail. For former St. Bernard residents like Allesha Landry, who was looking for a way out of St. Bernard before Katrina, it's a stark difference.

"I've seen people overdose on drugs, people getting shot, and kids getting raped in the hallways. I'm getting the chills talking about it real emotional for me," said Landry.

Landry and other former residents are going through an application process, which will check

credit history and criminal history. To be a resident of Columbia Parc, if you're not a student or senior citizen, you have to have a job or go to a vocational school.

More than 100 rental units will be ready for move-in later this fall. Pre-leasing has already begun, but if you're a former St. Bernard Housing Development resident and the head of your household, you have two more weeks to pre-apply. The deadline is Friday, July 24th. For more information, call 1-877-878-2669.

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