

About Cynthia Ann Wiggins

President/Chief Executive Office Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation

Cynthia A. Wiggins serves as the President/CEO of the Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation. She was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana and is the mother of one. For the past twenty years she has developed a wide range of experience working and volunteering in public and private housing as well as serving on various committees to address the issues of affordable housing, social justice for the poor and public improvement policies.

In December of 2000, the National Association of Resident Management Corporations appointed her as the President of its National Association which advocates legislation for urban communities. She was unanimously approved by her peer's and took the oath of office January 3, 2001.

As the President and Chief Executive Officer of Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation, Wiggins manage the day-to-day operations of the 4 million dollar non-profit organization with a core mission to provide excellence in service, economic development and improved housing for the residents of Guste Homes and public housing communities across the nation.

Wiggins has served as the Vice President of the Housing Authority of New Orleans Board of Commissioner, a 200 million dollar operation.

From 1994 until 1999, Wiggins served on the Lindy Boggs Literacy Center Board of Directors, Urban League of Greater New Orleans, Mayors Work Force Investment Board, Educational Governance Stakeholder Board, New Orleans Job Initiative Board and other local and national boards. Wiggins was the first public housing leader to serve as a Co-Chair person for a Mayoral Election under Former Mayor Marc H. Morial. It was because of her involvement and her quest to ensure the election of Mayor Marc H. Morial, former Mayor Morial was announced Mayor fifteen minutes after the poles closed in 1996. The news media stated "never in the history of this city have public housing had a 98% turn out in any election." The fifteen minute pole closing announcement sent shock waves through the city. It was also during this particular election that Ms. Wiggins register five thousand public housing residents within a month.

Wiggins graduated from L. E. Rabouin high school. She a certified Property Manager has received training and certification by Nan McKay in the property management managing, Nuts and Bolts of Accounting, from Bruno & Trevalon, and Tax Credit training. She's a Certified Child Care Instructor and has received training as Drug Prevention and Intervention counselor.

February 15, 2004, Wiggins received an invitation to serve on an advisory board to the Secretary of Department of Housing and Urban Development, Ms. Wiggins has served as a consultant to Tulane University under a contract with the Housing Authority of New Orleans. Since her tenure and involvement in public and subsidized housing she has worked closely with Mayors of the City of New Orleans and her Congressional and Senatorial elected representatives.

She recently through her effective management of the Guste Homes Public Housing Development was able to negotiate a 15 year contract with MMA Investors for the management of the Guste Homes Public Housing Property, Under her leadership two of her staff person is certified as Housing Credit Certified Professional which now makes the Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation the first Resident Management Corporation in the country to manage a tax credit property with HCCP certification.

Wiggins continues to volunteer with various local organizations as the City of New Orleans and the Housing Authority of New Orleans move forward in the post Katrina era.

WILLIAM J. GUSTE REDEVELOPMENT



BACKGROUND

The William J. Guste Homes public housing development is located in New Orleans' Central City, between the central business district and the renowned historic Garden District. Built in 1964, the original 21-acre site consisted of one 12-story high-rise building with 528 housing units for the elderly and six (6) low-rise buildings with 465 housing units for families (993 total units). In 2003 HANO submitted, and HUD approved, a Conversion Plan to demolish all six (6) low-rise buildings and replace them with new housing. HANO received a 2001 HOPE VI Demolition Grant for the demolition and relocation required to redevelop the Guste site.

In 2002, the Guste High-Rise underwent comprehensive modernization that included upgrading and making code compliant building services such as elevators, security, and fire alarm systems; providing each unit with individual heating, ventilation and air conditioning; and providing service areas tailored to the elderly such as meeting and laundry facilities, a community center, and improved landscaping.

The Guste site received minor damages from Hurricane Katrina. Units occupied at the time of the storm were quickly cleaned and repairs were made to provide immediate housing for families wanting to return. By November 2006, 366 residents had returned to the Guste site. An additional 94 long term vacant and otherwise damaged units were repaired for occupancy.

DEMOLITION

In July 2004, HANO demolished three of the six low-rise buildings, leaving only 228 units in the remaining three buildings. These units were to be demolished in subsequent phases of the Guste redevelopment project.

REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

In January 2005, HANO closed on the first phase of the Guste mixed-financed redevelopment, for the development of 82 low-income housing tax credit units, including 67 ACC and 15 Section 8 project-based units. This phase of construction was interrupted by Hurricane Katrina but was completed in February 2008. Guste I is being managed by the Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation (GHRMC), and is credited with being the first tax credit development to be managed by a public housing resident management corporation.

HANO planned to redevelop the balance of the Guste site in two additional phases immediately following the completion of Phase I. Due to the critical need to provide uninterrupted housing to residents post-Katrina, plans for further demolition of the Guste site have been delayed until adequate housing is available for the relocation of the families living in the existing units.

Capital improvements are planned for the existing units. A Physical Needs Assessment will be completed in the spring of 2009 to determine the needs of the elderly and low-rise units. Site improvements such as energy and electrical upgrades, safety enhancements, exterior painting and interior improvements to the elderly building and as well as exterior and interior unit repairs have been planned for the immediate future. Other improvements will be planned following unit assessments.

The original revitalization plan will be considered again in the spring of 2009. The plan contemplated constructing 167 additional onsite rental units of public housing, Section 8 Project Based and tax credit units. In addition, the plan included the acquisition of property in the surrounding area for the construction of 50 homes for purchase by low-income households and 50 Project Based Section 8 rental units. Plans also included the demolition of an existing Day Care Center and the development of a new one complete with community facilities.

UNIT SUMMARY

Phase	Affordable							Market			Total
	ACC Only	ACC/ LIHTC	PB S8	PBS8/ LIHTC	LIHTC Only	Home-Owner	Sub-total	Rental	Home-Owner	Sub-total	
<i>On-Site</i>											
High Rise	385	0	0	0	0	0	385	0	0	0	385
Guste I	0	67	0	15	0	0	82	0	0	0	82
Guste II	0	107	0	60	0	0	167	0	0	0	167
<i>Subtotal On-Site</i>	385	174	0	75	0	0	634	0	0	0	634
<i>Off-Site</i>											
Home-Ownership	0	0	0	0	0	50	50	0	0	0	50
Rental	0	0	50	0	0		50	0	0	0	50
<i>Subtotal Off-Site</i>	0	0	50	0	0	50	100	0	0	0	100
Total	385	174	50	75	0	50	734	0	0	0	734

CONSTRUCTION AND AMENITIES

The Phase I design includes 2 and 3-bedroom duplex units. Each unit has a washer and dryer hookup. Utilities for the units include electrical heating, appliances and air conditioning.

FUNDING

The total cost for Guste I was \$22.7 million. Sources included \$4.8 million in tax credit equity, \$8.3 million in capital fund bond proceeds, \$1.9 million in HOPE VI Demolition Grant; \$3.8 million in City funding for infrastructure, \$315, 000 from AHP and other funding.

CITYWIDE TENANT ASSOCIATION
RESPONSE TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Before we began our response to the questions outline in the Committee correspondent to Ms. Cynthia Wiggins, we want to acknowledge that Ms. Lillie W. Woolfolk serve as the President of the Citywide Tenant Association.

Response to the outlined questions:

- **What is the current status of public housing in New Orleans, including the Big Four public housing developments?**

In response to this question this information is based on the information we have received and what we know to have taken place at the various complexes.

Fischer Housing Development: HANO have begun moving forward with the implementation of the second phase of the redevelopment. The housing authority has held one meeting with the residents to discuss the design phase of the complex. HANO is proposing to allocate approximately \$18 million dollars on the second phase of the redevelopment.

Guste Homes Development: HANO is currently working with the Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation to begin the implementation of the second phase of redevelopment. HANO has allocated \$34.2 million dollars to Guste. The funding will address \$ 21 million for the construction of 18 new units, \$14.4 million to demolish an existing building and upgrading of the elderly complex and the renovation of 64 family units.

CJ Peete Development: HANO and its developer have completed the infrastructure at CJ. Peete. They have begun building units. The residents in conjunction with Urban Strategy have begun the process for social services that will be offered to the previous residents.

BW Cooper Development: In conjunction with the Resident Management Corporation the Developer has begun the infrastructure work at the site. The Citywide Tenant Association does have concern that closing has not taken place and concerns on the commitment of reasonable funding to the developer.

Iberville Development: We have great concerns regarding the current conditions at Iberville. At a meeting held with the agency HANO agreed and has established a committee consisting of residents from the development to develop a plan for the conversion of and upgrading of units. The agency has also allocated ORA funds for this site in the amount of \$27 million dollars. The committee meets on monthly bases to discuss the progress on the renovation, social services and management of the complex.

Lafitte Development: The Citywide Tenant Association have petition the National HUD office and ask that HUD not allow HANO to demolish the current units at the Lafitte complex. HANO invested \$4 million dollars to bring back on line the remaining 94 units. We have received no information on the redevelopment of the Lafitte development, nor have we been privilege to any funding information of the developer or seen a definitive plan for this property.

St. Bernard Development: This development redevelopment is moving forward. The infrastructure has been completed, buildings are being constructed. The developer has hired a social service agency to

begin the social service component for this property. The residents from the St. Bernard development have asked that we put in the record that they have some concerns on the eligibility criteria of the developer.

Florida Development: The housing authority has not provided any definitive plans for the opening of the Florida Development. HANO has not allocated any funding for the redevelopment of Florida. The residents at Florida have asked that HANO not demolish the current buildings (50 units) at the site. We believe that the current building are viable and can be gutted and reopen.

Desire Development: The second phase of the Desire development has begun with the building of 318 affordable units. HANO has informed us that the cost for the redevelopment is at \$44 million. The residents have asked that during this second phase of redevelopment that the building of the community center is built at a cost of \$4.5 million and the implementation of the supportive services begin.

- **In your opinion to what extent has the Section 8 program been effective in providing housing opportunities for low income residents?**

It is our opinion that the section eight program has been very effective in assisting families in getting affordable housing and has impacted what could have been an increase in homelessness. We further believe that because of the section eight program there has been a large increase in new development of affordable housing that accepts the section 8 certificate.

- **What housing challenges face low income families in New Orleans? How should these challenges be addressed?**

We believe the challenges facing low income families in New Orleans are their inability to pay the enormous utility and water bills. We also believe that the amount requested for security deposit will also be a major problem for families. The solution to this problem is to increase and provide utility allowance to these families. We also believe that HUD should establish a limit by unit size for security deposit. HUD should require a PHA to establish a lease agreement for this program that not only protect both the landlord and family. The lease should be a mandate agreement and can be modified according to program changes. To date residents have been evicted because of the landlord dislike for a tenant or for reasons that place the resident in a position of compromise. We believe if HUD mandate PHA's to establish a lease that must be used by all landlord, the resident and the landlord is than force to have an agreement of fairness.

- **What re-occupancy, or occupancy, criteria if any will be imposed upon returning residents or new residents? In your opinion what is the legality of such requirement?**

While the Housing Authority of New Orleans has its own re-occupancy/occupancy criteria, based on the HUD mandate, we believe that HANO at each of its redevelopment properties should require that there is consistency at each of the redeveloped sites with regards to returning residents or new residents. For instance each developer has established its own occupancy requirement. We believe that because the PHA has put public dollars into the redevelopment of these properties, the PHA should mandate that the developer's criteria conform to the PHA "Admission and Continual Occupancy Policy". We believe what some of the developers have proposed at the new properties is discriminatory. At one property it's mandatory that everyone in the household 18 and over work, at another property there is a work

requirement and at another property it's something different. We believe there must be a level of consistency especially the HUD ACC units.

- **Please share any other information regarding issues facing residents of public and subsidized housing in New Orleans.**

It is the opinion of the Citywide Tenant Association that the residents of public and subsidized housing will face an enormous amount of challenges as the City of New Orleans continues to go through its redevelopment. Most of the families coming out of public housing are the working poor and are paid a salary slightly above minimum wage. These families will now be faced with paying utilities and because of the enormous cost their challenge will be to not lose their housing assistance.

The other challenge is discrimination. The discrimination will be based on the fact that they lived in a public housing complex. We believe that because of the constant negative media coverage surrounding public housing many landlord and apartment complexes will reject individuals coming from these communities out of fear. Good families who need subsidized assistance will not be able to move into communities that offer them decent, safe and sanitary housing not because of who they are but because of where they came from.