

From the
LOUISIANA
 State Historic Preservation Office

Office of Cultural Development,
 Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Lieutenant Governor's Historic Building Recovery Grant Program Achieves Goals

By Stephen Fowlkes
 Historic Building Recovery Grant Program

Since early 2007, more than \$18.5 million in federal grant money has been allocated to repair damage to Louisiana's historic buildings caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and that was just the beginning. Congress authorized the grant money in late 2006 to aid with federal hurricane recovery efforts and funneled it to the state through the National Park Service. Louisiana received \$12.7 million of this allocation, which was specifically aimed at historic structures. Out of 1,882 applications received before the December 2006 deadline, grants were given to 287 properties in February of 2007.

Because so many other applicants were deemed eligible, the Lieutenant Governor's office, together with a coalition of national, state and local preservationists including Preservation Resource Center and the National Trust, lobbied Congress for more money for the program. A second appropriation of \$10 million was approved in the summer of 2007, allowing 256 more of the original applicants to be funded and bringing the total to 543. Grants were capped

150 grantees have finished their projects, and 332 are at least two-thirds completed, representing \$14,549,578 in repair and restoration work to historic buildings.

at \$45,000, to ensure that the money could be used to repair as many buildings as possible.

The program has been very successful, putting grant money directly into

the hands of owners of historic homes and other buildings. Unfortunately, all of the allocated grant money has been awarded, and at this time, there is no additional grant money available. Should there be another appropriation



Historic Building Recovery Grant recipient Helena Burrell in front of her house in the Central City Historic District in New Orleans

from Congress, any newly available grant money will be well publicized.

The Historic Building Recovery Grant Program is a new program within the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation, part of the state's Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, headed by Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu. (For more information, see www.louisianahp.org.)

The program has seven historic preservation specialists working directly with the owners of historic buildings who have been awarded a grant. From their offices in the Old U.S. Mint in New Orleans, these project officers assist the grantees in planning their repairs and renovations and track the work progress from start to finish. They also help



Historic Building Recovery Grant recipient Stacy Rockwood's house, Holy Cross Historic District in New Orleans

the grantees spend their grant money as wisely as possible, making decisions that follow historic rehabilitation guidelines established by the National Park Service.

Although there are some large, landmark-type buildings included among the grant recipients, the vast majority of the buildings being put back together by the program are what most residents of this area would recognize as very typical houses. These include buildings likely to be found in any of the local historic neighborhoods and districts that make this area so architecturally and culturally distinctive. So, while there are a few plantation houses and mansions utilizing the grant funds, there are many, many more single- and double-shotgun houses, Creole cottages, Arts and Crafts bungalows, raised-basement houses, Classical Revival townhouses and other buildings that have received the grants. These buildings are all being brought back to life with the help of the grant funds and the careful attention of the homeowner and their project officer.

Exactly what makes a building eligible for the grant? To be considered, a building must be on the National Register of Historic Places, either as a contributing element to a historic district, or as an individual listing. Contributing status is defined as those buildings over 50 years old that retain most of their original architectural features and character; in addition, they must reflect the reason that the district was formed. Individual listing on the Register is for highly significant historic buildings or sites not necessarily located in a National Register Historic District. For more information on the National Register of Historic Places, see <http://www.nps.gov/nr/> or http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/national_reg.htm.

Success Stories

As this article goes to press, the first round of grant projects is nearing its September 15 deadline. The Historic Building Recovery Grant Program staff is proud to say that 150 grantees have completely finished their projects, and 332 more are at least two-thirds of the way done with theirs. That represents \$14,549,578 worth of repair and restoration work to our area's valuable historic buildings.

Most people impacted by the storms would agree that the hurricane recovery efforts in our area have been frustratingly slow to start up, and all too often the government programs seem to be at odds with preservation principles. However, the Historic Building Recovery Grant Program is certainly one program that can proudly say that it is working successfully, allowing people to move home, and at the same time managing to save part of the irreplaceable infrastructure and historic culture of Louisiana.



Historic Building Recovery Grant recipient Michele Bray's house, Mid-City Historic District in New Orleans

Next month, we'll continue this profile of the Historic Building Recovery Grant Program, focusing on the project officers and their valuable work with the grantees.

We're also planning a series of articles to highlight some of our individual grant recipients and their houses later this year.