

Summary: Post-Sandy Funder Briefing--Series I

Funder Briefing: #11

Date: February 4, 2013

Topic: Housing issues related to Natural Disasters and Post Hurricane Sandy

Speakers: **Michelle Whetten**, Gulf Coast Vice President - Enterprise Community Partners;
Keith Fairey, Solutions Vice President - Enterprise Community Partners;
Staci Berger, Executive Director - Housing & Community Development Network NJ;
Kevin Walsh, Associate Director - Fair Share Housing Center

HIGHLIGHTS

Announcements

- [New Jersey Recovery Fund](#) has released guidelines - check their website
- CNJG members have been asked to share what they've done in response to Hurricane Sandy for Nina to report at the D.C. Conference. Funders not based in NJ can share their grantmaking in NJ, as well.

[Enterprise Community Partners](#) --Michelle Whetten and Keith Farley

Enterprise is a national affordable housing and community development organization that works with funders, lenders, advocates, innovators, policy changers and home owners to create thriving communities. Enterprise's framework is focused on three key areas:

- Increasing **capital** for addressing housing and community development issues
- Promoting public **policy**
- Formulating **solutions** to specific challenges where solutions don't already exist

Enterprise's NJ Activities:

- **Capital:** formed a rebuilding fund, raised enough money to award \$300,000 in grants. Enterprise is also looking at lending and equity, and building a program for retrofitting affordable housing across the region
- **Policy:** inform policy makers with what is happening and how to support local needs
- **Solutions:** Help organizations that own/manage affordable housing be prepared for future disasters
 - Housing solutions: research hopes to inform programs implemented by the state
- Enterprise is interfacing with NJs advocates and policymakers on weekly legislative update calls, helping to build dataset for benchmark recovery and look at needs

Key housing issues:

(1-4 family properties - owner occupied and rental homes)

- Clean up/Clean out
- Temporary housing
- Disaster Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) - support repairs for owner-occupied properties, which can ultimately allow owners to get property in condition to receive a buyout
- Nonprofit volunteer coordination

- Assisting homeowners in determining what to do with property, helping them navigate process, and helping them gain access to funding

(Multifamily rental)

- Low income tax credit and [CDBG-DR](#) were primary sources of funding after Katrina, and utilized a special allocation for 3 years of low income tax credits, which drove redevelopment of 25,000 units
- NJ doesn't have that the low income tax credit, so alternative ways to bring multifamily homes back online will be necessary

Funding strategies and considerations:

- Provide flexible money for organizations that have some amount of capacity and time to figure out their best role in recovery
- Consider holding back some money for longer term capacity
- Local government gets extremely stretched (permits, applications, code enforcement, etc.); help support "executives on loan" to local government.
- Disaster funding from federal sources are limited and takes a long time - adding private money can stretch the impact
- Get private sector financial institutions to invest in places they normally wouldn't
- Supporting nonprofits assisting home owners
- Supporting data and analysis - where the damage is, where the needs still are and what has been accomplished so far, like the [Greater New Orleans Community Data Center](#)
- Community revitalization fund created by [Greater New Orleans Foundation](#) attracted national dollars

[Housing and Community Development Network NJ](#) (Staci Berger) and [Fair Share Housing Center](#) (Kevin Walsh)

- Important that attention that is drawn to all affected communities, like the Ironbound District of Newark
- Concerned we haven't finished seeing help requested - undocumented population are afraid to ask for help
- Working for continued coverage in the media so unmet needs can continue to be addressed
- Trying to get the data we need from FEMA regarding statistics on rehabs, gutted, torn down, etc.
- Identifying vacant homes and apartments that could be temporary housing (we've worked to remove age restrictions 55+ communities that have openings)
- Advocate for inclusionary development and affirmative marketing - inclusive planning
- serving on joint state led task force and engaging with state and federal decision makers
- Make sure Civil Rights requirements are being satisfied in rebuilding efforts

[Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Relief \(CDBG-DR\)](#)

- \$6 billion in CDBG funds has been approved
- Urgent need for advocacy and transparency: The State put out an RFP for firms to manage CDBG money on Jan 17th.
 - The contract may already be awarded, and from the date that the contract is approved there are only 10 days for draft plan, and then only another 7 days for HUD to approve plan and for public comment. This process is moving incredibly fast and may have impact on low income families.
 - Each time HUD distributes funds, it's possible to request waivers for affordable and equitable housing - there must be monitoring to watch for abusive use of waivers

What funders can do:

Short-term:

- Support resources to help families move into temporary housing, as well as support legal and counselling work
- 1500 families in hotels may be moved to PA if NJ housing couldn't be found - assist in finding housing
- Huge rental market pressure - making sure that security deposits and rental costs are not taking advantage of displaced individuals

Long-term:

- Support and help mobilize adequate advocacy efforts
- Monitor the state to make sure the money is being spent responsibly
- Provide technical assistance to local folks
- Support media coverage of the untold regions affected by Sandy
- Match and support members of the Housing Alliance to work with communities that don't have as much in local capacity
- Help focus attention on the affordable rental development next to revel - there are plans to take it down even though we now have incredible market pressure on rental inventory

FOLLOW UP

Speakers will supply more detailed information in writing which will be distributed via the listserv.

Beginning on the first Monday after Hurricane Sandy struck New Jersey, The Council of New Jersey Grantmakers began hosting weekly conference calls for grantmakers in-state and nationwide, facilitated by CNJG President Nina Stack, to discuss their response to Sandy and strategies facing NJ as a result of the storm. Each conference call briefing offered expert guest speakers who represented government agencies (FEMA, HUD, HHS, etc.), national philanthropic leaders, expert psychologists with experience in PTSD, planners and community redevelopment leaders, and representatives from NJ's Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, among others. The twenty-five audio files and written summaries are available at:

<http://cnjg.org/hurricane-sandy>