

FEMA funds will build schools, community centers

By Peter Finney Jr.
Clarion Herald

As a result of damages from Hurricane Katrina, the Archdiocese of New Orleans expects to receive more than \$170 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to build or restore schools and community centers throughout the region, Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond announced Dec. 15.

The single largest project on the drawing board is a new \$35 million campus for the Academy of Our Lady, an all-girls' high school in Marrero, Archbishop Aymond said.

The projects also include \$25 million in new construction and renovation at five central elementary schools in Orleans Parish and four new

community centers in New Orleans, to be built at Corpus Christi-Epiphany, St. Mary of the Angels, St. David and Transfiguration of the Lord parishes.

In releasing a detailed report on the "project worksheets" completed by FEMA for the archdiocese – along with an accounting of how the archdiocese intends to use the FEMA funds – Archbishop Aymond said he was both "grateful" and keenly aware of the archdiocese's responsibility to be "good stewards" as it rebuilds its battered infrastructure.

Strategic planning process

The FEMA reimbursement process began shortly after Hurricane Katrina. The archdiocese launched a pastoral planning process that

involved input from parishes, the Office of Catholic Schools, the Finance Council, the Building Office and the Property Management Office in which it assessed its ministries and facilities and determined which parishes and schools would reopen.

FEMA regulations do not allow reimbursement for damages to buildings used specifically for religious purposes, such as churches, rectories and convents. But because the archdiocese operated dozens of schools and other non-religious buildings – which are eligible for damage reimbursements – it is one of the top single entities in the city to receive FEMA reimbursements, Archbishop Aymond said.

"When you think about the

number of children we educate and form in our Catholic schools, it's not surprising that this would be one of the largest numbers in the city," Archbishop Aymond said. "That's because the number of children we educate (about 39,000 after Katrina) is larger than some other school districts."

Help for central schools

Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes determined first that in addition to rebuilding Our Lady of Prompt Succor in Chalmette, Resurrection of Our Lord School in New Orleans East, Our Lady of Lourdes School in Slidell and Archbishop Hannan

High in Goodbee, he would find money to fund repairs and upgrades to the central schools in New Orleans.

The projects next in line for funding were a middle school classroom building at Our Lady of Prompt Succor in Chalmette, a classroom building at Mary Queen of Peace (due to large population growth after Katrina), and the new campus for the Academy of Our Lady.

Four parishes with schools that closed after Katrina – Corpus Christi-Epiphany, St. Mary of the Angels, St. David and Transfiguration of the Lord – requested to use FEMA funds to establish community centers.

Archdiocese of New Orleans Reports on FEMA Funding Post-Katrina

Total FEMA Reimbursements Received
\$61,980,774

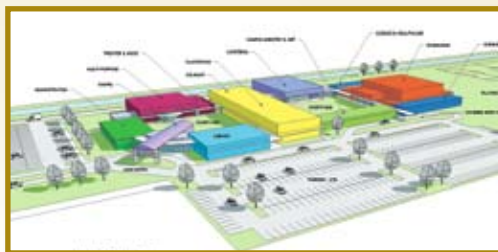
- Includes all projects throughout the archdiocese.
- Cleanup, evacuation, demolition, repairs and new construction.

Additional FEMA Reimbursements Anticipated
\$108,157,322

- Includes projects in progress
- Includes proposed school work
- Includes proposed community centers
- Excludes Christopher Homes, Catholic Charities and nursing homes

Total Received and Anticipated FEMA Reimbursements Funds At This Time
\$170,138,096

- Preliminary estimate
- Does not include estimates for future Christopher Homes and Catholic Charities projects



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The Archdiocese of New Orleans will build a new \$35 million campus for the Academy of Our Lady in Marrero.



Photo by Frank J. Methe | CLARION HERALD

Archbishop Hannan High School, built with FEMA reimbursements, opened in Goodbee in 2008.



Two school projects on the drawing boards are a gym at Our Lady of Lourdes, Slidell, left, and a new classroom building at St. Peter Claver Central Catholic School, right.

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