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Governor Barbour Awards Affordable Housing Grants

Posted: Feb 20, 2008 03:33 PM CST

Updated: Feb 20, 2008 04:00 PM CST

Governor Haley Barbour Wednesday announced the awarding of \$150,000,000 to build affordable housing in South Mississippi.

Dozens of private companies and charitable groups applied for this latest round of Hurricane Katrina money. The long-term "workforce housing" money will be used to build nearly six thousand homes.

"We had 71 propose. Sixteen of them were chosen. And that will generate 5,850 units of housing," said Governor Barbour.

Among the groups receiving the money: The Gulf Coast Renaissance Corporation will get \$40 million for an employer-based home buyer assistance program; \$13 million goes to Habitat for Humanity, for building new homes in Gulfport, Long Beach and Ocean Springs; and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation will receive \$15 million to repair and rehab damaged homes.

"These are pretty impressive for low income housing," said the governor, as he got a firsthand look at how tax credits helped finance a post-Katrina expansion at a Gulfport apartment complex.

The affordable housing development features attractive buildings that look more like expensive townhouses.

"They're beautiful. We're very happy here," said Christina Kern.

She and her husband welcomed the governor to their second story unit. Katrina claimed the couple's home in Bay St. Louis. Finding a place like this, they consider themselves among the fortunate.

"It was very hard to find a place to live after the storm. There's a lot of people still in FEMA trailers. So, they're waiting to get in here," said Kern.

Cora and Samuel Cooley say they too are blessed to call Brookstone Park apartments home. As they played host to a Mississippi VIP, they reflected on the circumstances that brought them there.

"I lived on 34th over in the Village, in Gulfport. And we got flooded out. Had about eight or nine feet of water," recalled Cora Cooley.

The only water at their new apartment is in the complex swimming pool. With rents starting around \$500 a month, there's a 12 page waiting list of prospective tenants.

"When the public sees this, they will have a very, very different idea," said Governor Barbour.

When you say affordable housing, many people envision a plain, projects-type development. And that misconception has been a hurdle in efforts to build affordable housing like Brookstone Park.

"They definitely do not picture something like this. One of the things about our program, we do

have minimum design standards that developers must abide by," said Dianne Bolen with the Mississippi Home Corporation.

[By Steve Phillips](#)



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