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AFTER THE STORM THE LONG ROAD BACK

Empty trailers, reluctant neighbors

FEMA has the mobile homes, but no one can agree where they should go

 NBC VIDEO



Launch

• **Katrina trailer fight**

Dec. 27: Thousands Hurricane Katrina evacuees in New Orleans are waiting for temporary housing, but proposed trailer park locations have sparked stiff opposition. NBC's Ron Mott reports.

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By Ron Mott

Correspondent

NBC News

Updated: 8:05 p.m. ET Dec. 27, 2005

NEW ORLEANS, La. - A lack of temporary housing is slowing the return to New Orleans for tens of thousands of Hurricane Katrina evacuees. FEMA says more than half the 30,000 trailers believed needed are ready to roll into the city— some are already there. But proposed trailer park locations have sparked infighting at city hall and stiff opposition as well from some homeowners.

Rebuilding in New Orleans

A little power to the trailer in his front yard, and Nick Kleamenakis says he'll have the energy to tackle the big job of rebuilding his house in New Orleans. "All I need is electric, and I'm in business," he says.

Despite the hard work ahead for Kleamenakis, he's fortunate. In less-damaged areas where the city's mayor would like to put FEMA trailer parks for those who can't stay on their property, there is not a trailer to be found. And it's not because of supply.

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FEMA says nearly 18,000 trailers for the hurricane zone are waiting in Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. So far, *fewer* than 1,700 trailers are occupied in New Orleans.

What's the problem?

An ugly fight has been brewing in the city for weeks about where these trailers should go. FEMA says 500 trailers are arriving every day, but they just sit there because no one wants them in his backyard.

Homeowners like Alecia Williams fear increased traffic and crime. "We do have to do the Christian thing, but I think that's going beyond the scope," says Williams.

The issue is charged with undertones of class and race. An unidentified homeowner was quoted in the Times-Picayune as saying, "You used to have murders on the news every night. Nobody would want to live next to that."

Mayor Ray Nagin called on city residents to have a heart. "For some people to say 'Not in my neighborhood,' I think is not very New Orleanian and it's not very Christian," said Nagin.

But Nagin lost a power struggle at city hall about who should get final say over site selection. "We know better areas than they're picking. They're picking stupid areas," say Jackie Clarkson, New Orleans City Council.

Un-neighborly behavior?





In the meantime, Nick Kleamenakis settles in on the long road back, unsettled about all this un-neighborly behavior.

"Some people's lives are back to normal so they just want to put all this behind them," says Kleamenakis. "But the people who are still displaced, their life is not behind them. It's still in front of us."

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