

Good to be home



Robert Green on the steps of the home he lost. Behind him is his new house

Vor vier Jahren überflutete der Hurrikan Katrina Teile von New Orleans. Nach dem Sturm saßen aber viele Menschen ohne Hilfe auf dem Trockenen. Dank einer Initiative von Brad Pitt gibt es für sie wieder Wohnraum und Hoffnung. BRIAN GAUVIN berichtet.

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into New Orleans. The Industrial Canal wall was part of the levee system built to defend the city from flooding, but it failed. The devastation was immense.

A surge of water tore through the Lower 9th Ward, a neighborhood next to the canal. The storm destroyed 250,000 houses and killed more than 1,800 people on America's Gulf Coast. Seventy of the dead were from the Lower 9th, as were 3,000 of the houses. The area was hit hard by the storm, and few thought it could ever recover.

Today, the landscape in the Lower 9th is gentle and green, with old concrete piers — from houses long gone — rising like tombstones in the tall grass between empty streets. Only a hundred or so houses have been re-

built in the Lower 9th, and some are surprisingly different from the simple homes that stood here before.

These new houses have strong, modern shapes. They are raised above the ground on new concrete columns, with

A CLOSER LOOK

A levee is a wall, often of earth, that is found in nature or man-made to prevent a large body of water from flooding low-lying areas. Levees are usually built parallel to a river or the coast. The New Orleans levee system failed to protect the city from the Mississippi River on one side and Lake Pontchartrain on the other.



Old or new? A conventional house (left) and Melba Leggett-Barns's Make It Right house. Right: the 2005 flood



solar panels shining on metal roofs that take off at various angles. Painted in strong colors, such as bright yellow and sky blue, the houses seem to be making a statement about where the Lower 9th is headed.

The development is part of a project called Make It Right (MIR), which Brad Pitt started in 2007. He hopes to bring the people of the Lower 9th back home — back from trailers in Texas, friends' apartments in North Carolina, and from the various other places where they have lived since the houses they owned were destroyed. Now, some of MIR's first houses are finished, and the old residents of the Lower 9th are moving back in.

"I really love the houses," says Green. "For 44 years, I lived in a house on this lot. We lived there until Katrina. I lost my granddaughter, Shanai Green, who was three years old, and my mother, Joyce Green, who was 73, both on the same day. Shanai was washed away in 25 feet of water. My mother actually drowned, and we resuscitated her, but after taking in all that water, she was real sick, and she just couldn't endure."

A week after the storm, Green went to Nashville, Tennessee, where he thought about buying a home. There seemed no reason, or way, to rebuild in the Lower 9th Ward. "I stayed in Nashville until October 15, when they found my granddaughter's body," Green says. "I came down here to identify it. Once they found my granddaughter and I came back home, I decided that I wasn't going back to Nashville."

In late 2006, Green moved into the trailer and made plans to rebuild his house. In August 2007, he met two MIR scouts who were looking for former residents who wanted to rebuild on their own lots in the Lower 9th Ward. Green was impressed with the concept and joined MIR in persuading his ex-neighbors to come home.

A few houses down the street, Melba Leggett-Barns is watering the plants in the community garden next to her house, which was designed by the Philadelphia firm of Kieran Timberlake.

"Those are some beautiful people," says Leggett-Barns of the architects who built her new place. She says her energy bills are now around \$30 per month, as opposed to \$300–\$400 before the storm. "This was our land," she adds with pride in her voice. "I was living here on this lot before the storm. We had just renovated the old house, and it all got washed away. I love my new house. I feel perfectly safe here."

Building a safe, sustainable future for the Lower 9th is what Brad Pitt decided to do in 2007. It's no simple task: the houses had to be inexpensive so that people returning could afford to buy them. Even so, MIR chose top archi-

angle ['æŋɡəl]	Winkel, Richtung
as opposed to [əz ə'pouzɪd tə]	im Gegensatz zu
beautiful ['bju:tɪfəl]	toll, wunderbar
column ['kɔ:ləm]	Pfeiler
concrete ['kɔ:nkri:t]	Beton
drown [draʊn]	ertrinken
duct tape ['dʌkt teɪp] US	Gewebeklebeband
endure [ɪn'dʊə]	durchhalten
energy bill ['enədʒi ,bɪl]	Stromrechnung
even so [i:vən 'soʊ]	trotzdem
headed: be ~ ['hedɪd]	unterwegs sein; hier: sich entwickeln
lot [lə:t] N. Am.	Parzelle, Grundstück
neighborhood ['neɪbərɦud]	(Stadt)Viertel
pier [piə]	hier: Zugang
resuscitate sb. [rɪ'sʌsɪteɪt]	jmdn. wiederbeleben
scout [skaʊt]	Kundschafter(in)
scream up [ˌskri:m 'ʌp]	heraufstürmen
smash into sth. [ˌsmæʃ 'ɪntə]	in etw. einbrechen
solar panel ['səʊlə ,pænl]	Sonnenkollektor
Sr. = senior ['si:njə]	senior
surge [sɜ:dʒ]	Flutwelle
sustainable [sə'steɪnəbəl]	umweltfreundlich, nachhaltig
take off [ˌteɪk 'ɔ:f]	hier: ausgerichtet sein
tear through sth. [ˌteə 'θru:]	sich mit zerstörerischer Gewalt über etw. hinwegbewegen
tombstone ['tu:mstəʊn]	Grabstein
trailer ['treɪlə]	Wohnwagen