Resource Guide

Generated November 28, 2026 · 2 open facilities · closed facilities are not listed · call before you go: details change quickly

LA

PARISH GOVERNMENT, Avoyelles Parish – Marksville, LA Contacts

Info/Hotline · Open

County
Marksville, LA

Web www.louisiana.gov/Government/Parish_Avoyelles
Service Temporary

Avoyelles Parish Sheriff's Office
675 Government St
Marksville, LA 71351
(318) 253–8217

Avoyelles Child Protection
930 N Main St
Marksville, LA 71351
(318) 253–7734

APAC Community Services
641 Government St
Marksville, LA 71351
(318) 253–9590

City of Marksville
207 E Bontemps St
Marksville, LA 71351
(318) 253–5754

Fire Departments
512 N Main St
Marksville, LA 71351
(318) 253–7776

Fire Departments Brouillette Community
Marksville, LA 71351
(318) 253–4519

National Guard
510 W Waddil St
Marksville, LA 71351
(318) 253–6852
Campaigns: 2008 Hurricane Gustav
Updated May 15, 2011 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/3542

Canadaville, Louisiana (Also known as Magnaville)

Info/Hotline · Open

Community
Simmesport, LA

Associated Press
Katrina Families Settle in Canadaville
By BECKY BOHRER 06.29.07, 2:04 PM ET

When her husband first told her about Canadaville, Dawn Charbonneau worried it might be a cult.

A place in the country, built by a Canadian industrialist, where hurricane–displaced families could live rent–free if they followed the rules. It sounded too good to be true.

Yet she was taken with Canadaville, a sprawling property where squirrels scurry in open fields and the songs of birds and bleats of goats carry on the breeze. It was a curative tonic for the cramped FEMA trailer park where the Chabonneaus and their three children had lived after Hurricane Katrina.

The slower pace of life, uncrowded nearby schools and corn–country peace have been good for the children, ages 5 to 13. "They can sleep at night without hearing gunshots," said Dawn Charbonneau, whose family fled both Katrina and the violence of New Orleans about 150 miles away.

Her initial reservations about Canadaville, she says, were long ago put to rest.

Canadaville, with its goats and chickens, gardens and fishing holes, is the brainchild of Frank Stronach, chairman of Canadian autoparts maker Magna International (nyse: MGA – news – people). After Katrina hit in August 2005, Magna sheltered hundreds of evacuees at its Palm (nasdaq: PALM – news – people) Meadows thoroughbred training center in Florida. But Stronach also wanted land in rural Louisiana, outside the hurricane zone, where families could start over and build their futures.

"It's a hand up, not a handout," Magna spokesman Dan Donovan said.

Stronach, who was not made available for an interview, bought 900 acres in September 2005, and Canadaville opened three months later. Total initial investment was estimated at $7.5 million.

Officially named Magnaville, the site was dubbed Canadaville as a nod to its Canadian benefactors. Canadian and U.S. flags fly side by side at the welcome center. "This is just neighbor helping neighbor," Magnaville President Dennis Mills said.

People can live at Canadaville rent–free for five years if they follow a "charter of conduct." Among other things, they must work or go to school, volunteer at least eight hours a week, participate in the community council and stay away from drugs, project manager Shane Carmichael said.

There are after–school and tutoring programs for children, computer and job–training classes for adults and plans to operate an organic farm. While Magna provides housing and other activities, residents do not receive cash payments.

Canadaville's population stands at about 210, mostly black and from New Orleans; some residents have just arrived in the past few weeks. More than half the original 190 residents are still here, Carmichael said. Few, he said, have been evicted for breaking the rules.

Background checks are done on prospective residents, many of whom are referred by the Red Cross or word of mouth. Once at Canadaville, they can be tested periodically for drugs. Their guests must check in and get a pass if they're staying overnight. A guard sometimes mans a post at the entrance but residents are free to come and go as they please.

Quiet, paved streets with names like Pelican Place and Honey Bee Road wind past the 49, three–bedroom modular homes, each of which is about 1,200 square feet and has a close–cropped lawn. In parts of New Orleans, swaths of neighborhoods remain in ruins, with houses empty or molding, still–devastated by the floodwaters.

It's a very different life for most of the former urban dwellers.

Eli Bryant sees Canadaville as a blessing, with the laid–back lifestyle and outdoors work he longed for. For Barbara Stewart, it's been a culture shock: a Wal–Mart (nyse: WMT – news – people) several towns away is the nearest major shopping venue.

The influx of Katrina evacuees also was culture shock for nearby Simmesport, a town of 2,200 people where outsiders are easily spotted.

That was a big deal when plans for Canadaville were first proposed, Carmichael said. Some Simmesport residents worried murderers and

rapists would be coming to their town, he said, alluding to reports of violence in New Orleans after Katrina.

So Magna pledged to buy patrol cars for the Simmesport police, pay for three more police officers for five years and build a sports complex and a recreation center that would double as an evacuation center. Mills estimates total corporate, private and nonprofit investment could reach up to $12 million. Canadaville has received no state or federal funding, he said.

Carmichael said the patrol cars have been purchased, and ground broken on the sports center. Still, he said there has been friction with Simmesport Mayor James Fontenot.

Fontenot told The New York Times he was frustrated by fights and break–ins in town, which he blamed on the new residents. The mayor refused to speak to The Associated Press, referring questions to the town attorney, Bart Hebert. The police chief also did not return repeated phone calls for comment.

Carmichael said he hopes the relationship can be mended; so does Hebert.

"The mayor's just looking out for the best interests of the town," Hebert said, adding he's heard reports of increased break–ins but wasn't sure they could be traced to Canadaville.

Many in town have welcomed Canadaville residents, and the dollars they spend on groceries and at general stores. Some have hired the newcomers.

Jackie Quebedeaux, a convenience store manager, said it doesn't matter to her where the Canadaville residents came from, "as long as they're honest, and want to work."

Many residents don't have cars, so fare–free buses take them to work or stores. Longer trips to Alexandria, 50 miles away, cost $10 a day.

Bryant, a former construction worker from New Orleans' tough Central City neighborhood, says the rules aren't hard to live by. He'd been hoping to leave New Orleans before Katrina. The storm took most of his possessions, but also gave him the final reason to leave town.

At 56, Bryant feels he's found his calling: farming. He is content in figuring out what seeds grow in the clay soil and weeding rows of fruits and vegetables, and in gathering eggs from the hen house.

"I enjoy it," he said as he stuck cantaloupe seeds into planting pods in the greenhouse.

Nearly two years after its inception, Canadaville remains a work in progress. In addition to working to have the farm certified organic, there's talk of a possible processing facility for biodiesel or ethanol, Carmichael said.

Canadaville's residents are encouraged to get to know one another and the broader community, and Dawn Charbonneau's husband, Mike, organizes weekend barbecues and fishing derbies.

"It's a good place to try to prosper and rebuild," said Mike Charbonneau, now a shipbuilder in Simmesport, who added his family is talking about buying a house.

Dawn Charbonneau remembers feeling free her first nights here, "like all my troubles were behind me. It's like this was a second chance for me, my husband and my kids."

Canadaville
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Canadaville is a project by Canadian industrialist Frank Stronach to build an experimental model community for people displaced by Hurricane Katrina. It is situated on 3.69 square

kilometres (912 acres) of land in Simmesport, Louisiana. Rather than simply providing temporary shelter to the evacuees, a measure that often ends up as an exercise in crowd control, Canadaville aims to help its residents integrate into a long–term holistic farming community. It will raise livestock and seafood which will be served at Stronach's Gulfstream Park in Palm Beach, Florida.

The 75 mobile housing units are 1420 square feet (132 square meters) in size, and have three bedrooms and two bathrooms, air conditioning, washers, dryers, and other amenities. As former Canadian MP Dennis Mills described it, "this is no FEMA Village".

Residents, which numbered over 200 by August 2006, Katrina's first anniversary, will be able to stay rent–free for five years, with the requirement that (if able–bodied) they contribute to the community by learning new skills or using their existing skills. Since many of the Katrina evacuees were extremely poor and generally not well–educated, Canadaville's backers hope that the Canadaville experience will help the evacuees gain self–reliance that they didn't have before. Stronach explained, "we would hopefully be able to put in an infrastructure whereby you would create a new life for them, a life of hope, spirit, so that they will be self–supporting and not on welfare. That's the idea."

Services offered: Housing, Free Houses for Local Residents in Need
Campaigns: 2005 Hurricane Katrina
Updated Sep 23, 2007 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/1515