The Community Development Commission (CDC) was honored to host the National Association for County Community and Economic Development's (NACCED) 36th Annual Conference and Training, held September 17-21. The CDC welcomed participants to Downtown Los Angeles' JW Marriott, located at L.A. LIVE, where they participated in an educational forum that offered real-world learning and networking opportunities relating to affordable housing and community and economic development.

The CDC's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Division planned the event, which brought together more than 100 professionals from all over the country. Conference attendees had opportunities to sit in on sessions that included topics such as strategies for coping with diminished resources, how to incorporate green building practices into affordable housing and community development programs, and using technology to effectively manage grant programs.

During the awards luncheon, Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina provided the welcome remarks, while the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, and former Housing Director for the City of Los Angeles, Mercedes Márquez, addressed participants as the Keynote Speaker. Also during the awards luncheon, Terry Gonzalez, Director of the CDBG Division, was the recipient of the Roy D. Hoover Award, NACCED’s highest honor, which is awarded to an individual who has made extraordinary contributions and achieved significant accomplishments in his or her service to NACCED, to the housing, community development and economic development profession, and to county government.

The CDBG Division was also highlighted during the awards luncheon as a winner of an Awards of Excellence in the category of Policy/Planning/Program Management. NACCED members recognized the recent multi-faceted, grassroots advocacy campaign used by the Division to increase awareness of benefits of the CDBG Program and discourage further budget cuts to the program in Fiscal Year 2012.

The Conference concluded with a bus tour showcasing Los Angeles County’s local affordable housing and community and economic development projects. The CDC’s impressive attention to detail in orchestrating the event did not go unnoticed, making the Conference one of the most successful to date! Attendees not only got a real feel for what Los Angeles County has to offer, but also received valuable professional-building skills and information to take back home.
On August 25, 2011, over 125 Nueva Maravilla public housing residents, 12 partnering agencies, including East Los Angeles Community College (ELAC), the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA), the Community Development Foundation, and members of the surrounding community, gathered to discuss ways to transform East Los Angeles into a “community of promise.” The discussion focused on how to improve local education, set educational priorities, and transform the area to meet residents' educational needs.

The resounding message from the community was that learning opportunities are not just contained within the walls of a school, but can be found elsewhere: in gardens (to learn nutrition, biology, and wellness); monuments and gateways (to learn history, cultural sensitivity); and pedestrian-friendly streets (which provide access to schools, libraries and other resources).

With the support of the East Los Angeles Community Partnership, ELAC took the lead to apply for a $500,000 U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhood Planning grant to create a cradle-to-college-to-career continuum of learning for residents of the Maravilla community. HACoLA anticipates receiving the results of the application in December 2011.

Additionally, on September 22, 2011, HACoLA hosted a site visit with Luke Tate (pictured above), who represents the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI), an interagency strategy to transform neighborhoods of concentrated poverty into neighborhoods of opportunity. Mr. Tate acknowledged the efforts and improvements which have already taken place within the Maravilla community and emphasized that “all Americans need safe, healthy neighborhoods, with affordable housing and access to good jobs and quality schools.”

HACoLA and the East Los Angeles Community Partnership appreciated the opportunity to meet with Mr. Tate and voice their commitment to taking an integrated approach to improving educational outcomes for Maravilla Community youth.

During the 1st Quarter of FY 11-12, the CDC and HACoLA were awarded several grants to supplement programs and services.

The South Whittier Community Resource Center (CRC) was awarded a $10,500 Kaiser grant to fund their new Heart Education, Awareness, and Readiness Training (HEART) program. Starting in January 2012, the HEART program will provide an environment for prevention and management of cardiovascular disease. The CRC will do this through education and activities to familiarize Whittier residents in ways to manage their health through preventative measures and enjoyable activities. Through collaborative relationships with numerous community partners, the CRC will also share materials, and work to identify the CRC as a resource for cardiovascular disease prevention and management.

Further, HUD awarded over $1.4 million to HACoLA’s Section 8 and Public Housing programs to help hire coordinators to assist low-income families find employment and increase their self-sufficiency. The funding includes: $621,000 through the Housing Choice Voucher Family Self-Sufficiency Program (HCV/FSS); $720,000 through the Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency – Service Coordinators Program (ROSS-SC); and $69,000 through the Public Housing – Family Self-Sufficiency Program (PH-FSS). The coordinators will assist voucher recipients and public housing residents with finding employment resources and job training opportunities to put them on a path toward self-sufficiency.

Sean Rogan, Executive Director, notes, “The CDC and HACoLA continue to take a proactive approach to securing supplemental funding. I’m proud that Kaiser and HUD have recognized the excellent work we do as an agency and lent their support to furthering our mission.”
2010 Charitable Giving Campaign

During the August 16, 2011, Board of Supervisors meeting, the CDC, represented by Bobbette Glover and Kathleen Allen (pictured to the left), was acknowledged for its participation in the 2010 Charitable Giving Campaign. By collecting over $3,000, the CDC and HACoLA had the highest per capita contribution rate amongst agencies of similar size. The County-wide Charitable Giving Campaign raises funds through donations from each of the County’s Departments and Commissions. Funds collected are donated to several agencies including: United Way of Greater Los Angeles, Brotherhood Crusade, Asian Pacific Community Fund, Earth Share of California, United Latino Fund, and the Community Development Foundation.

In addition to the collection, an additional $7,870 was donated to various charities, through the generous payroll deductions set up by CDC and HACoLA employees, bringing our grand total to $10,880 for FY 2010-11! As the CDC embarks on its 2011 fundraising campaign, Harold J. Pierce, Director of the Administrative Services Division, states, “It is my hope that our dedicated employees continue to give generously to help improve the quality of life for low-income children and families across the County.”

CONCERTS UNDER THE STARS

Throughout July and August, the Community Development Foundation (CDF) participated in the Hafif Family Foundation’s Concerts Under the Stars fundraisers. CDC and HACoLA staff were given the opportunity to purchase tickets and CDF received 100% of the proceeds from the tickets it sold, earning over $1,000!

Each concert began with an appetizer from Walter’s Restaurant in Claremont. While “Elvis Presley” serenaded the crowd, concert goers were served their dinner entrée. Each night concluded with a 2-hour show by either the 12-member Smooth Touch Band, playing the best hits from the 70s, 80s, and 90s, or by the long-time saxophonist, Mark Allen Felton.

The 81-year old Herb Hafif, a long-time entrepreneur and philanthropist, made a brief presentation to the crowd to inspire each person to continue pursuing their own good work in the community. If you weren’t able to make it to this year, be sure to join CDF next summer for what is sure to be an equally enjoyable Concerts Under the Stars experience!!
During the month of August 2011, HACoLA's Housing Management Division sponsored another successful series of Back to School Jams at the Carmelitos, Harbor Hills, Nueva Maravilla, Sundance Vista and South County (scattered sites) Public Housing Developments. This annual event first began at the Carmelitos housing community in 2000 and has been expanded to other housing developments over the years to assist all County public housing youth and their families celebrate the kick-off of the new school year.

This year, over 50 exhibitors provided educational and health-related resources and information to over 800 families. A partial list of participating agencies included: University of California Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles County Work Source Centers, Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs, Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles, Goodwill Industries, and the Los Angeles Prevention Project for Life, as well as local businesses.

Public housing youth were treated to an afternoon of entertainment, food, dance, watermelon eating contests, piñatas, and raffles. However, the highlight of each Back to School Jam was the distribution of backpacks stocked with age-appropriate school supplies to public housing youth attending grades K-12. This year, the Resident Services Program staff distributed 1,000 backpacks – the most ever distributed in the history of the Back to School Jams. In addition to free backpacks and supplies, students also benefitted from free school uniforms. These gifts were made possible through the generous support of Shelter Partnership, a local non-profit organization that provides resources and housing assistance through its S. Mark Taper Foundation Shelter Resource Bank.

One Nueva Maravilla parent expressed to staff, “Thank you so much for the backpacks for my kids, it helped us out a lot.”