More than 70 years ago, this nation committed itself to providing a decent home and suitable living environment for all Americans. Today, 15.6 million households pay more than half of their income for housing; and homeless estimates for individuals are nearly 750,000 (over 50,000 of which are in Los Angeles County alone). Safe, decent, and affordable housing is pivotal in our society. Beyond providing basic shelter, it positively impacts the economy and improves quality of life.

In October 2011, the Community Development Commission and Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (CDC/HACoLA) participated in the nationwide Housing America Month Campaign as a way of recommitting the agency to the national goal of meeting the housing needs of all Americans and continuing to carry out our mission to Build Better Lives and Better Neighborhoods!

As part of the Housing America Month festivities, the CDC/HACoLA selected three housing projects or programs to spotlight as prime examples of innovative thinking, and interagency partnerships whose results directly benefit the residents of Los Angeles County. Below are the selected projects and programs.

**Harshfield Terrace Senior Housing Project**

After three years of planning, local officials and community members joined the CDC/HACoLA in celebrating the dedication of Harshfield Terrace in April 2011. Comprised of 75 units, this three-story development provides affordable housing for age and income-qualified seniors earning fifty percent (50%) of the Area Median Income or below. Harshfield Terrace offers a multi-purpose room, laundry room, library, and arts and crafts room for its residents.

**The Growing Experience**

The Carmelitos Public Housing Development (Carmelitos) is the CDC/HACoLA’s largest public housing development, with over 700 Los Angeles County residents. The Growing Experience (TGE), a 7-acre Urban Farm located within Carmelitos, has received multiple awards over the past year, and continues to mature as a valued member of the Long Beach community. TGE provides public housing residents and low-income members of the surrounding community with access to fresh, locally-grown, produce at an affordable cost, job training, and educational courses.

**Sierra Bonita Mixed-Use Project**

The Sierra Bonita Apartments Project is the first all-affordable mixed-use green building development in the City of West Hollywood. The development broke ground in the summer of 2008, and was completed 18 months later, in February 2010. The newly constructed five-story building includes 42 one-bedroom units for very low-income households with permanent disabilities, and 3,000 square feet of street level space serving non-profit agencies. Sierra Bonita is a pilot project for the City’s Green Building Ordinance.
Housing Authority Highlights

**HONORING OUR PARTNERS**

On Wednesday, November 9, 2011, HACoLA held its annual Partners Breakfast to honor non-profit agencies and local businesses for their generous donations and services that benefit the residents of its public housing developments. All partners were presented with Certificates of Recognition, a 2012 Youth In Focus Calendar, and a delicious breakfast. In addition, attendees were treated to an exhibit highlighting the work of HACoLA’s photography program, Youth In Focus.

In his welcoming remarks, Sean Rogan, Executive Director of HACoLA, noted, “It is through the generosity of our partners, who support our Resident Services Program, that HACoLA is able to offer such a wide variety of job training opportunities, skill building, youth development, and social services programs for residents of all ages. Your contributions support HACoLA’s efforts to improve the quality of life for the nearly 1,500 youth, and over 1,000 families who benefitted from the Resident Services Program last year.”

Testimonials from several Public Housing residents who spoke of their own personal challenges and successes were a highlight of the event. LaTonya Smith, pictured to the left, a single mom who lives at the Carmelitos Housing Development, spoke of her own aspirations to become a Probation Officer. Currently attending college in pursuit of her dream, Ms. Smith shared with the audience how the Resident Services Program assisted her to access resources, such as childcare, to help her begin her path toward self-sufficiency. As she stated, “I am very grateful for the services on site that help to keep me motivated and connected to community resources.”

**HACoLA REACHES ITS GOAL**

HACoLA has officially achieved “High Performer” status under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP). On October 11, 2011, HACoLA received final notification of its High Performer ranking under SEMAP for fiscal year ending June 30, 2011.

SEMAP enables HUD to better manage the Section 8 tenant-based program by identifying Public Housing Authorities’ (PHAs) capabilities and deficiencies related to the administration of the program, enabling both HUD and PHAs to provide more effective administration of the Section 8 Program.

Since receiving a troubled designation in 2006, HACoLA has focused its efforts on overhauling Program operations, and in 2008 HACoLA achieved a “Standard” rating. Since then, it has been HACoLA’s goal to achieve a “High Performer” rating by fiscal year ending 2012. Careful planning and implementation on behalf of Management, and a focused and diligent staff, enabled HACoLA to achieve its goal.

High Performer status will allow HACoLA to apply for additional programs and funding, allowing for an increased level of service for families in Los Angeles County.

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On November 16, 2011, the CDC participated in the groundbreaking for Caroline Severance Manor. Located in the City of Los Angeles, and adjacent to the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles, the five-parcel property was assembled in partnership with the California Community Foundation Land Trust and the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles. Mercy Housing California will develop a mixed-use community that will include structured parking for the church and a licensed childcare center in a new development for families, a portion of which will be supportive housing for homeless individuals and families living with severe mental illness.

It is anticipated that approximately 56% of the apartments will be designated as supportive housing. 30 one-bedroom units will be designated for adults living with severe and persistent mental illness, and 18 of the larger units will be designated for the families of children who are dealing with severe emotional disturbances and who have been, or are at risk of being, removed from their homes by the County.

In a unique partnership with the Los Angeles County Departments of Mental Health and Children and Family Services, and the Child Welfare Initiative, the family units will be targeted to Kincare Families—households in which children are cared for by a relative other than their parent. The CDC is providing $3.1 million in City of Industry funds for the development of 85 affordable rental units. Construction will begin in Fall 2011 and is expected to be completed by Spring 2013.
The CDC/HACoLA works year-long to Build Better Lives and Better Neighborhoods. For the CDC and HACoLA, the holidays present the perfect opportunity to go the extra mile to ensure that their program participants, and their families, are able to embrace and enjoy the spirit of the season.

Each year, HACoLA hosts its Resident Services Annual Toy Drive which provides gifts to over 800 youth living at its public housing developments throughout the County. This year’s holiday celebrations were held from December 13-20, 2011.

For more than 10 years, the Annual Toy Drive has helped bring holiday cheer to the low-income residents of HACoLA’s public housing developments. Through the generous donations from partners and donors, the Annual Toy Drive allows public housing residents the opportunity to kick off the holiday season through the enjoyment of food, games, and a community celebration. Public housing youth receive gifts, which, over the past years, have included age-appropriate toys and clothing.

Additionally, on December 21, 2011, the CDC held its 14th Annual Holiday Basket and Toy Giveaway for 300 unincorporated South Whittier-area families. The Holiday Basket and Toy Giveaway has been held at the South Whittier Community Resource Center (CRC) since 1996 and has been jointly-sponsored by Los Angeles County Supervisors Gloria Molina (1st District) and Don Knabe (4th District), and the CDC. As a result of the recent redistricting, the CRC will now be fully represented by the 4th district.

Preparation for this event started in September when CRC staff began pre-registration of income-qualified families, solicitations for contributions, and recruitment of various community/volunteer groups who donate hours of labor to make the event possible. Each pre-qualified family received a food basket including a turkey with all the holiday trimmings, rice, beans, and fresh produce as well as toys for over 750 children.

The events wouldn’t be possible without the generous support from various public and private organizations and donors such as Shelter Partnership, Inc., California Highway Patrol, Toys for Tots, area residents, as well as CDC/HACoLA staff. Their valuable donations of time, food, toys, and supplies made these events a great success.

Of course, no holiday event would be complete without a visit from Santa Claus himself who always stops by to greet families, hand out gifts, and take photographs with the children. Through events like these, the CDC/HACoLA is able to give Los Angeles County residents holiday memories that will last a lifetime.

For more information on the CRC visit www.swcrc.org.

For information on the Resident Services Program visit www.hacola.org.
On December 9, 2011, top officials from HUD, along with Congresswoman Judy Chu, convened at the Nueva Maravilla Public Housing Community to unveil a Section 3 Business Registry pilot program. Through this new registry, businesses that hire, or are comprised of, low-income individuals, will have a searchable online database to access contracting opportunities with housing authorities, local governments, and other HUD-funded departments.

Moreover, the new registry will provide low-income residents with a single source of information to find eligible Section 3 businesses and job opportunities. “This business registry is one of the key connecting points between jobs and housing,” said John Trasvina, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. “For businesses, there is an incentive to self-certify as a Section 3 business because contracts go to the companies that hire low-income and public housing residents. It’s a win-win situation for businesses and the residents in the community.”

Section 3 of the Housing and Development Act of 1968 promotes employment, training, and contracting opportunities to low-income residents who live in communities where HUD funds are spent. Expanding job opportunities is one of the Obama Administration’s highest priorities in California and across the nation.

In September 2011, the CDC’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Division invited residents throughout the County’s five Supervisorial Districts to learn more about the County’s CDBG Program and provide feedback on their economic, housing, and community development needs through the Fall Community Meetings. As part of the County’s CDBG application process, the Community Meetings not only fulfill the citizen participation component of the process, but also help Supervisorial District Offices prioritize the County’s limited CDBG allocation.

The meetings were well attended with over 140 residents on hand to learn about the Program and complete a survey on their community needs. Surveys were also mailed out to local residents with excellent results. In the end, over 600 resident surveys were collected through the Community Meetings and through the mail.

Residents were asked to rank eligible CDBG activities according to the needs in their neighborhoods from a scale of 1-4, (1) indicating “No Need” and (4) indicating “Greatest Need.” The graph above shows the top five areas of need identified collectively by all of the County Supervisorial Districts. These areas include Anti-Crime Programs, Graffiti Removal, Employment Training, Job Creation, and Trash Removal. For complete survey results by District, please visit: http://www3.lacdc.org/CDCWebsite/NewsDisplay.aspx?id=4624

CDC/HACoLA Retirees

Larry J. Matthews retired on December 27, 2011, after 30 years of service to the CDC. Over the years, Larry lent his talents to HACoLA’s Section 8 Program, served as Acquisition Principal and Program Manager for the CDC’s Handyman Program, and finally retired as Manager of the Housing Preservation Unit of the Housing Development and Preservation Division.

Yolanda Cota, Program Specialist in HACoLA’s Housing Management Division, retired on December 22, 2011, after 31 years of service. HACoLA is very grateful for Yolie’s valuable contributions to the Nueva Maravilla Public Housing Community, and most recently, the Crime and Safety Unit.