LACDA Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

On March 13, 2020, the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) deployed a Workforce Operational Plan with the goal of continuing operations while maintaining a safe environment for employees and the public amid the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The LACDA serves a variety of clients in numerous settings. For example, the agency has staff deployed within the County Superior Courts, at satellite offices, in the field, as well as some who see clients directly and others who have no public interaction.

As continued evidence of community transmission of COVID-19 in the County grew, the LACDA did its part to slow the spread by adopting strategies that created physical distance. While the agency’s offices did not shut down completely; its lobbies were closed to the public to provide the maximum protection. To continue serving its clients, agency operations shifted to conducting business by telephone, emails, and online portals.

There are many unknowns in terms of how long the agency will operate under special circumstances, but the LACDA remains committed to ensuring the health and safety of its clients and employees, while making every effort to maintain its well established standard of service.
On February 14, 2020, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Ben Carson visited the Carmelitos Public Housing community in the City of Long Beach. The Secretary’s visit was in conjunction with an announcement from HUD that the LACDA is a recipient of a four-year $1.8 million Jobs-Plus Initiative (Jobs-Plus) Program grant for Carmelitos.

The Jobs-Plus Program seeks to develop locally-based, job-driven approaches to increase earnings and advance employment outcomes through work readiness, employer linkages, job placement, educational advancement, technology skills, and financial literacy for public housing residents. Additionally, the Jobs-Plus Program grantees are required to demonstrate a 25% match from community partners, providing wrap-around supportive services to improve employment and earning outcomes.

With support from the Jobs-Plus Program, and in partnership with the Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network, Long Beach City College, New Opportunities Organization, University of California Cooperative Extension, Long Beach Unified School District Head Start, YMCA Greater Long Beach, Cottonwood Church, and the Los Angeles Community Development Foundation, the LACDA will effectively support its residents on their path to self-sufficiency and meet the employment, training, and supportive service needs of over 1,778 Carmelitos residents.
On January 31, 2020, the LACDA, in partnership with the City of Covina, was proud to be recognized by the National Community Development Association (NCDA) as a recipient of the 2020 Audrey Nelson Award during the NCDA Winter Conference in Washington D.C. The award, which recognizes outstanding community development projects and programs across the country, was created 33 years ago in honor of NCDA’s first Deputy Executive Secretary, Audrey Nelson.

NCDA recognized the Covina Senior and Community Center project, which held its ribbon cutting on July 31, 2019, for the measurable impact in meeting the needs and improving the quality of life for seniors and residents of the City of Covina.

As one of the County’s CDBG participating cities, the City of Covina has partnered with the LACDA to deliver quality projects and programs to their residents for more than 40 years.

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**LACDA Project Receives National Recognition**

On January 31, 2020, the LACDA launched Open Doors, a business model that centers on providing an enhanced customer service experience for property owners. The effort encourages more owners to participate in rental assistance programs, thereby, expanding the pool of available units for families looking to utilize their vouchers in the highly competitive Los Angeles County rental market.

Open Doors is a collaborative effort with the County of Los Angeles to provide property owners with an increased level of customer service. Open Doors offers property owners incentives such as a sign-on bonus, vacancy loss payments, and damage mitigation assurances.
On March 11, 2020, the LACDA celebrated the grand opening of Metro @ Western. The 33-unit affordable housing development is located within a short walk from the Western stop on the Metro Expo Line.

Built by Meta Housing Corporation and Western Community Housing, Metro @ Western includes affordable and supportive housing for chronically homeless veterans, households with limited means, and one unit for management. The amenities include outdoor lounge areas, community garden, large community room with kitchen, computer lab, and offices for property management and supportive services.

The LACDA provided approximately $1.5 million in Affordable Housing Trust Funds for the construction and permanent financing of the development. LifeSTEPS, a non-profit committed to community development and ending generational poverty, provides intensive case management, mental health assessment and counseling, physical health care, substance abuse services, medication management, employment assistance and life skills training. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will provide additional healthcare support to eligible homeless veterans.

A Tradition of High Performance

On February 26, 2020, the LACDA’s Public Housing Program received a High Performer designation from HUD for the 10th year in a row, under its Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS). The PHAS is an in-depth evaluation of a Public Housing Agency’s (PHAs) performance including the physical condition of properties, financial health, management systems, and the effectiveness of its modernization Capital Fund Program. The LACDA received a top rating in each category, with a total score of 98 out of 100, the highest score in its history!

As part of the PHAS, this year, HUD inspected the LACDA’s South and East Los Angeles County properties totaling 1,176 units, including Nueva Maravilla, with 504 units. In the last three years, the LACDA has invested over $18 million for capital improvements at these properties.

Acting Executive Director Emilio Salas gives credit to his staff who worked diligently to achieve a Higher Performer rating, while simultaneously completing timely unit work orders, annual reexaminations of program eligibility, unit upgrades and inspections, preparing vacant units for occupancy, and calculating the family rent amounts in accordance with HUD requirements.