

CDBG E-NEWSLETTER



Bi-Monthly Update for Participating Agencies from the Community Development Block Grant Division Issue XXVI October-November 2007

FALL COMMUNITY MEETINGS HELD!

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Division recently held a series of Fall Community Meetings throughout the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. One (1) meeting was held in each Supervisorial District and served to educate residents about the CDBG Program and to solicit input relative to their community and economic development needs. The CDBG Division partnered with a host of County departments, who, during the meetings, introduced themselves and their services and were available to answer questions after the meetings.

The Community Development Commission (CDC) would like to extend a big "thanks" to the County departments that helped make these meetings a success. The departments in attendance included: Department of Regional Planning, Department of Public Works, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Community and Senior Services, and Department of Consumer Affairs. Other County agencies we would like to thank include: the Sheriff's Department, the County Library, the County Police, and the Housing Rights Center. With the help of these departments and a host of other individuals, the meetings went off smoothly providing everyone involved with the opportunity to learn about Los Angeles County's communities.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

This month in Washington, Congressional Democratic leaders will be planning to send several appropriations bills for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 to the President. One (1) of these bills deal with funding levels for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs, like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). During a recent evening session, the House and Senate conferees approved a conference report for the FY 2008 Transportation HUD Appropriations Act. This action reconciles differences between the House and Senate versions of the appropriations bill. Among other programs, the agreement provides \$3.79 billion for CDBG, which is \$100 million above 2007, but about \$400 million below 2001 funding levels. The report must now be approved by both chambers and following that, sent on to the President for signature. The bill is still subject to presidential veto because it is \$3.1 billion above the President's FY 2008 request. However, leaders in Congress will look to create a post-veto strategy for their passage. In doing so, the funding tug-of-war between Congress and the Administration is likely to begin.

In response to dramatic cuts in certain areas of the budget as recommended by the current Administration, the proposed bills look to compensate, by restoring funding and making more investments in national priorities, thereby demonstrating a commitment to fiscal discipline. As such, it is key that different housing and community development supporters advocate for the passage of appropriation bills like these. You can help us by reaching out to your representatives in Congress, asking for their support for policy measures that will ensure adequate funding and successful programs.

A recent show of support by the United States Conference of Mayors resulted in a letter being sent to Senate Appropriation Leadership, urging support for the House-approved CDBG appropriation of \$3.929 billion in FY 2008. Approximately 150 Mayors across the country signed the letter. Unfortunately, only seven (7) of those cities were participants of the Los Angeles Urban County Program. Local support for the Program is critical to CDBG funding levels, so now is the time to make your voices heard. Together we can make a difference!

ANOTHER CAPER COMPLETED

It's Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) time again! The last few months of every year mark an important time for our Federal Programs. Specifically, this is the time of year when the CDBG Division analyzes and reports our Program accomplishments to HUD. This report summarizes the accomplishments achieved through each of our three (3) formula grants: CDBG, Home Investment Partnerships Program, and Emergency Shelter Grant. This is done through the CAPER. The document is the end product of the annual Consolidated Plan cycle and reports the accomplishments achieved in comparison to the goals established in both the Consolidated Plan and the Action Plan.

The CAPER reports that the County has exceeded the minimum federal regulation requiring 70% of program expenditures to benefit low- and moderate-income persons. From 2004-2007, 90% of the CDBG Program expenditures have benefited low- and moderate-income persons. Community-Based Organizations spent \$3,730,476; Commercial Businesses spent \$235,492; CDC Divisions spent \$17,545,084; County Departments spent \$1,326,514; Other Public Agencies spent \$542,049; and Participating Cities spent \$11,031,059.

The overall accomplishments of the CDBG Program for 2006-2007 were quite impressive. To start, about 1.57 million people were served with a variety of services, ranging from recreation programs, counseling, and architectural barrier removal. 3,249 public facilities were improved; 2,157 businesses were assisted through activities such as façade improvements, micro loans, and technical assistance; and 5,708 housing units were assisted through residential rehabilitation and code enforcement activities.

The Grants Reporting and Administration Team (GRAT) had the daunting task of creating this document within 90 days after the end of the grantee's program year. So from June 30th until September 1st, GRAT burned the midnight oil, this year submitting the CAPER on September 28th. Copies of the Draft CAPER were sent to selected community libraries and the public was notified in the Los Angeles Times and La Opinion. It will be available on the CDC's website in mid-November. Great job GRAT!



LA COUNTY HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER NOW ONLINE!

As part of the March 2006 Homeless Prevention Initiative, the CDC joined with Los Angeles County's Chief Executive Office to launch a web-based housing listing and referral center that has benefits and free services for residents, cities, landlords, community-based organizations, and County departments.

The Los Angeles County Housing Resource Center can now be found at <http://housing.lacounty.gov/> (no "www" is needed). Managed by a national non-profit agency called Socialserve.com, this web-based service provides free listings to landlords and free searches to tenants looking for affordable, special needs, and emergency housing resources. The housing listings are updated bi-weekly and a toll-free call center is available to help all users list or search for housing.

Although the site was launched quietly, with little fanfare, the County's Housing Authority quickly learned that landlords and tenants alike both responded well to Socialserve.com's efficient and free system. Listing and search statistics have shown a steady growth, with over 600,000 housing searches being made in the first six (6) months of operation. In that same time period, over 1,600 landlords listed over 1,200 vacant affordable units, many of which accept Section 8. With this level of interest, use of the site is expected to continue to grow.

The site will continue to expand its list of Los Angeles County resources, including a restricted access section for approved agencies and housing locators. It's a great resource for landlords and as a referral for any resident asking where they can go to look for affordable housing. Participating cities are invited to refer landlords and inform housing and community development staff of the new resource. As word spreads, we expect our list of partner logos at the bottom of the Home Page to grow steadily, and we invite participating cities to endorse and join in this regional effort to collect and share affordable, special needs, and emergency housing information.

To view the site, please go to: <http://housing.lacounty.gov/>

SOCIALSERVE.COM COMES TO THE AID OF FIRE VICTIMS

Through an agreement with HUD, Socialserve.com, the operator of Housing.LACounty.gov, the County's new internet-based housing resource center, has been asked to help residents displaced by the recent California wildfires. HUD has instructed Socialserve.com to use any and all means to assist the wildfire victims find available housing as their damaged homes are being repaired or replaced.

Property owners with housing to rent should visit either Housing.LACounty.gov or Socialserve.com immediately to make their units available to the disaster victims. There is no charge for this service, but it can be of great value to the people who have been displaced by the widespread wildfires. Socialserve.com will work to coordinate and update rental listings and will help the victims of this recent disaster to locate housing over the next few weeks.

ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE RESPONSE TO CRISIS IN SUB-PRIME MORTGAGE MARKET

There are currently two (2) pieces of legislation being introduced in both the House and the Senate in response to the crisis in the sub-prime mortgage market. The first seeks to increase the portfolio limits to enable enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae to buy sub-prime loans that have been restructured or refinanced. The bill also stipulates that 85% of new investments made by Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae would target borrowers who have sub-prime loans in danger of default.

The second bill includes comprehensive legislation to reform mortgage practices in several areas. Among the different reforms, a federal duty of care requiring mortgage originators to provide loans to borrowers that are appropriate to their circumstances. The bill also sets a minimum standard for all mortgages that borrowers have a reasonable ability to repay. And lastly, it attaches a liability to secondary market entities that sell mortgages outside of these standards. With the addition of this legislation, future mortgage crises can hopefully be prevented.



November 2007

11/15/2007

Deadline for Exhibit A Submission for County departments and CDC divisions

11/15/2007

New agencies and new staff from continuing agencies: Quarterly Performance Report Training

11/22-11/23/2007

Thanksgiving (CDC Offices Closed)

11/28/2007

City Quarterly Meeting - CDC's Commission Room, 10:00 a.m.

11/30/2007

All Agencies: Submission of 1st quarter 07-08 web-based QPR's are due