

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Long Beach Housing Development Company

City of Long Beach, CA

2006

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I. SUMMARY OF COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Although the City of Long Beach continues to offer diverse housing alternatives, many low and moderate income citizens find it difficult to locate quality, affordable housing in the city. The city of Long Beach Housing Services Bureau, which is part of the Community Development Department, works in partnership with the Long Beach Housing Development Company, to develop and maintain affordable housing options throughout the City. The Housing Services Bureau and the Long Beach Housing Development Company have developed comprehensive programs that tackle the need for affordable housing in a number of ways: by providing assistance to first time homebuyers; assisting existing owners fix up their property; providing assistance to developers of affordable housing and finding appropriate shelter for others with special needs.

The Communications Plan (Plan) is being developed to meet the communication needs of the Long Beach Housing Development Company and to capitalize on the numerous opportunities created by the active and successful work of the LBHDC and the desire of the group to plan, promote and increase awareness of the City's overall mission to increase affordable housing in Long Beach.

The goal of the LBHDC is to communicate clearly, proactively and effectively with key Long Beach audiences. This goal will be best met through comprehensive planning, the ongoing guidance and implementation by a staff communications specialist and an integrated set of communication tools and activities.

This Communications Plan outlines communications and public outreach components and a timetable for development and implementation, including audiences to be targeted and key messages, designed to act as a schedule of tasks to be completed within the first year of the Plan.

This draft Communications Plan will be presented to LBHDC members, Housing Services Bureau staff, the Community Development Department and any other constituents for comments and input. The implementation of the Plan, should it meet with approval from these parties, will begin in full 2006.

II. MISSION OF LONG BEACH HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

The Long Beach Housing Development Company (LBHDC) is a non-profit, public benefit corporation created by the City of Long Beach to aid in the support, financing and development of affordable housing in Long Beach. The LBHDC is overseen by a Board.

The LBHDC works with the City of Long Beach Housing Services Bureau, which is responsible for the preservation and production of affordable housing units in the City, through rehabilitation, new construction and first-time homebuyer assistance programs. The Housing Services Bureau's programs were developed to provide assistance to the developers and owners of affordable housing, as well as the low and moderate income citizens who are interested in these properties. The Bureau provides assistance to developers and owners to help them produce and provide rental units at affordable rates. The Bureau also provides assistance to new homebuyers and assistance to qualified property owners of single-family homes, mobile homes and multifamily properties in rehabilitating their homes and properties using below market rate loans.

It is the goal of the Long Beach Housing Development Company to enhance the quality of life for very-low, low and moderate-income individuals and families and to meet the special needs of seniors, disabled and homeless people through the provision and preservation of decent and affordable housing.

III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The following goals are supported by the Communications Plan:

- Promote and publicize successes – past, present and future – of the LBHDC.
- Develop LBHDC key messages – what we want the public to know about LBHDC and the need for affordable housing in Long Beach.
- Use communications/public outreach to improve understanding of LBHDC programs and the need for affordable housing in Long Beach.
- Increase media interest and awareness of LBHDC's goals and activities; develop strong relationships with media by providing ideas, information and access on an ongoing basis.
- Reduce negative press or public perceptions of affordable housing projects in Long Beach.
- Provide multi-lingual communications tools and events as appropriate.
- Educate public on causes and solutions to lack of affordable housing in Long Beach and throughout the U.S.
- Increase transparency of LBHDC activities.

- Strengthen working relationships between LBHDC and other community organizations, City officials, housing agencies and other interested groups and individuals.

The following are specific objectives of the Communications Plan:

- To inform and educate media, general public and City officials and staff on LBHDC's programs and activities and the need for affordable housing in the City of Long Beach.
- To educate the general public on the causes of poverty, the reasons for the lack of affordable housing in Long Beach and the ways affordable housing for low and moderate income families improves quality of life for all residents of Long Beach.
- To create forums and venues for informative dialogue among general public, media, City officials and businesses on issues of affordable housing.
- To provide information, statistics and anecdotal information about affordable housing to general public, media, City officials and businesses.
- To act as a resource and clearinghouse of information for the media with the goal of becoming a "must quote" organization on affordable housing and related quality of life issues in Long Beach.
- To provide a voice to citizens who are in need of affordable housing in the City of Long Beach.
- To ensure that the general public has access to information on affordable housing in the City of Long Beach.
- To increase awareness among other City staff of what the LBHDC does and its successes.

IV. TARGET AUDIENCES

The following audiences are the key targets of the Communications Plan:

1. General public: Includes all residents of Long Beach
2. City Council members and other policymakers within the City
3. Other key city departments and Bureau partners including the Redevelopment Agency, Economic Development, Workforce Development and others
4. Communities where affordable housing projects exist: Includes all residents and businesses in the areas where affordable housing exists or is planned
5. Media: Includes Long Beach print, broadcast, radio and internet media
6. LBHDC and Housing Services Bureau: includes all staff and Board members
7. Business community in Long Beach: Includes City business owners and employers

V. MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATIONS

The City of Long Beach is highly committed to reaching out to all members of our target audiences. To accomplish that goal, the Communications Plan is designed to utilize communications tools that will be made available to non-English-speaking members of the general public as well as those who speak English.

One primary way of doing this will be by utilizing translators at all appropriate meetings and by posting events and meetings in multiple languages (primarily Spanish and Khmer) and to provide language translations for pertinent documents.

VI. KEY MESSAGES

The following are proposed key messages for the Long Beach Housing Development Company. Key messages are developed as a short list of things the LBHDC wants members of targeted audiences to know about projects, activities and its mission. All communications and public outreach activities are built around these messages. When communications and public outreach efforts are successful, targeted audiences will have incorporated these messages into their understanding of LBHDC.

- LBHDC has a long history of success
- Quality of life in Long Beach has been greatly improved by LBHDC projects
- LBHDC is committed to providing quality, affordable housing for families and individuals throughout the City regardless of race or ethnicity
- LBHDC and the Housing Services Bureau has a committed, professional and effective staff and Board
- Affordable housing is necessary to maintain and enhance Long Beach's quality of life for all citizens
- All partners in the affordable housing process are treated fairly, with generosity and humanity
- LBHDC conducts all its business ethically and with financial integrity

VII. COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

The following are communication-related issues that will be addressed and mitigated through the successful implementation of the Communication Plan:

- Need to improve understanding by City Council and other City officials of the importance of the activities, programs and goals and successes of LBHDC
- Need to improve general understanding of the role and responsibilities of LBHDC and the Housing Services Bureau
- Need to increase understanding in the general public of need for affordable housing in Long Beach
- Need to educate general public on why affordable housing increases quality of life for all citizens
- Personalize public's knowledge of who LBHDC and Housing Services is by increasing understanding of who Board is, what the projects are, how the work is undertaken and completed.

VIII. CHALLENGES

The following are challenges the LBHDC and Housing Services face when developing housing projects:

- Some city officials and residents want LBHDC to develop more ownership programs and fewer rental programs
- Public perception that affordable housing in a city attracts people that have few options and means (an increase in poverty)
- Need to educate public that when a family is able to occupy an affordable housing unit it increases their disposable income, adding more revenue to the City through additional spending on other items
- Lack of public understanding that affordable housing helps reduce housing overcrowding in city
- Need to increase knowledge of the role and benefits of code enforcement regulations
- Need to increase understanding that with proper code enforcement existing housing can be improved and overcrowding minimized even if people are moving out into better quality housing (doesn't create a continual cycle of poverty in Long Beach)

IX. KEY COMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The following are the key projects that will be undertaken to meet the goals and needs of communication with key audiences:

1. Quarterly Housing Services/LBHDC Newsletter

- Develop quarterly newsletter to increase understanding by public and city officials of the importance, need for and projects and activities of LBHDC and Housing Services
- Secure newsletter designer (or use internal staff) to design newsletter
- Hire newsletter editor who will oversee story development and writing of articles
- Finalize publication schedule, funding and distribution mechanisms for newsletter
- Publicity campaign to notify readers of newsletter:
 - Newsticker on City homepage
 - Council-ticker
 - On-hold phone message
 - Notice on City website homepage
 - Press release/ Community Announcement document
 - Notice in "The Wave"
 - Putting newsletter in utility bills
 - Distribution through Neighborhood Services

2. Housing Services Website Redesign and Development

- Hire website editor to oversee redevelopment of Bureau website, writing of new material and oversight of website following redesign
- Work with Tech Services to change website to create separate section for Housing Services and LBHDC press releases
- Add navigation links to Housing Services website for press releases and newsletter
- Create place for newsletters to be posted
- Add section to E-Notify to allow people to specifically receive information on housing related events and activities and any press releases and the newsletter
- Develop and approve Website Redesign Plan, which will develop website into a comprehensive and dynamic source of information on projects, activities and the important and need for housing development in Long Beach

3. Media Relations Activities

- Increase regular release of Agency press releases and Public Announcements (1-2 times per month)
- Invite journalists to tour projects as appropriate
- Develop relationships with journalists and editors and educate them on issues important to housing development
- Participate in guest column program of Long Beach Business Journal "Perspectives"
- Work with local media to increase coverage, input from board and staff through op-eds, regular columns, appearances on cable shows etc
- Pitch story ideas to media on resident and project profiles, real life stories of people assisted by housing development in Long Beach, etc.

4. Speaker's Bureau Involvement

- Increase participation in City Speaker's Bureau program by enrolling Program Officers, LBHDC Board members to speak to community groups on affordable housing

5. Program Brochure Development

- Review all existing materials and documents used to communicate with the public
- Meet with key staff and Board members to discuss what they need when they communicate with the public
- Determine which documents need to be updated
- Develop new materials to highlight various programs and any other materials that are needed

6. Public Outreach and Education Activities

- Announce series of Town Hall meeting between community members and Board in areas that are affected by housing projects to educate the public on what we are doing and why it is necessary and to allow participants to ask questions
- Plan and develop speakers, venues, hosts for Town Hall meetings

7. Media Training for Staff and Board

- Provide media training to staff, Board members and others to educate interested participants on the most effective way to work with the media, what protocol is for working with the media and ways to structure projects and activities to be media-accessible

8. Annual Publicity Item

- Develop annual publicity tool i.e. calendar with photos of affordable housing developments or profiles of families who benefited from the programs OR annual report OR other event/publication/direct mail campaign

X. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The following Implementation Schedule is organized as a one-year plan of discreet projects and the steps needed to develop and manage ongoing projects. This schedule is intended to be flexible to allow it to adapt to changing priorities within the Housing Development Company, as well as respond to unforeseen events and needs. The Implementation Schedule also indicates which staff will take the lead and those involved in the completion of the item:

Phase 1. --- January - March 2006

A. Development and Approval of Communications Plan

1. Present to LBHDC for input and feedback
Staff: Housing Services/ PIO
2. Revise Plan/approve
Staff: PIO/LBHDC/ Housing Services
3. Press release to announce new communications effort by LBHDC
Staff: PIO

B. Quarterly Newsletter Project

1. Hire newsletter editor
Staff: Housing Services with input from LBHDC
2. Design and develop newsletter
Staff: Editor with oversight by Housing Services and PIO
3. Production of 1st newsletter by April 1, 2006
Staff: Editor with oversight by Housing Services and PIO
4. Distribution of newsletter
Staff: Editor and Housing Services
5. Publicity to announce newsletter
Staff: PIO

C. Preliminary Website Redesign

1. Hire website editor/designer
Staff: Housing Services
2. Develop new website template/design
Staff: Website editor/designer with oversight by Housing Services and PIO
3. Approve new website template and design
Staff: Housing Services

PHASE 2. --- April -- June, 2006

A. Media Relations

1. Increase regular release of Agency press releases and Public Announcements (1-2 times per month)
Staff: Housing Services/PIO
2. Guest column in Long Beach Business Journal "Perspectives"
Staff: Housing Services author (or LBHDC) with assistance from PIO
3. Set up tour of projects with local journalists
Staff: Housing Services with assistance from PIO

B. Website Revision Project

1. Rewrite/revise existing website
Staff: Website editor/designer
2. Work with Technical Services to update site
Staff: Website editor/designer
3. Train Housing Services webmaster on new website
Staff: Tech Services

C. City of Long Beach Speaker's Bureau

1. Enroll Housing Services staff and Board member in City's Speaker's Bureau
Staff: PIO
2. Publicize availability of speakers through Community Announcement
Staff: PIO
3. Track requests for speakers
Staff: Housing Services

D. Media Training

1. Provide media training to staff, Board members
Staff: PIO

PHASE 3. --- July – September, 2006

A. Program Brochures

1. Review all existing materials and documents used to communicate with the public
Staff: Housing Services
2. Meet with key staff and Board members to discuss material needs
Staff: Housing Services
3. Determine which documents need to be updated
Staff: Housing Services
4. Develop new materials
Staff: Housing Services with assistance from PIO

PHASE 4. --- October - December, 2006

A. Media Relations – continued

1. Meet with reporters, Editors, editorial boards to discuss Housing Services projects and activities
Staff: Housing Services, PIO
2. Pitch story ideas to media on resident and project profiles, real life stories of people assisted by housing development in Long Beach, etc.
Staff: PIO, Housing Services

B. Community Meetings

1. Announce series of Town Hall meeting between community members and Board in areas that are affected by housing projects to educate the public on what we are doing and why it is necessary and to allow participants to ask questions
Staff: PIO, Housing Services
2. Plan and develop speakers, venues, hosts for Town Hall meetings
Staff: PIO, Housing Services, Board

C. Annual Publicity Item

1. Develop annual publicity item such as calendar, event or annual report
Staff: Housing Services, Board, PIO

XI. PLANNING FOR 2007

At the end of 2006, Housing Services and the Board will meet to discuss strengths and weaknesses of communication tools and projects to date and determine what additional items and activities should be implemented in 2007.