



Spring 2005

CCSM NEWS

Building Community Through Housing

A native's return home

Born and raised working class in Santa Monica. Product of local schools: Madison, Roosevelt, Lincoln, Samohi. Twenty-some years on the same block in her mother's home.

She grew up and could not afford to live here, near her family, regardless of any concessions.

Hers is not the story of her mother.

Three jobs, cleaning houses and other exhausting physical work. Home late in the evening trying to eke out her last energy to make the kids' dinner. Never free to go to Open House or teacher conference. Working hard for the kids but too tired to ever really muster doing anything with them except getting from day to day.

Christina Lopez can't remember how many years ago she applied for housing assistance. All she knows is that her recent move into a Community Corporation apartment gave her son a good night's sleep, a mother 10 minutes from his school in case of emergency, and time to do homework, dinner and bath before 9 p.m., when her 6-year-old goes to sleep in his own bed in his own room.

For the last three years, she woke little Carlos before it was light out to commute an hour from North Hollywood to Santa Monica, where Fred Segal offered the only retail job she has found that provides day hours, a decent wage, parking included, and the ability to go to occasional school events. As a single mother, and having experienced being a child whose mother could not participate at school or talk about daily concerns, she really wanted to find a way to be there for her son.



Carlos, in foreground, now lives 5 minutes from his school in CCSM housing, which his mother feels makes him a better student.

Now, having moved to 11th Street in Santa Monica three months ago, "I feel like because of the life change, my son really has had time to think about what is being said to him, and process the things he needs to learn. It has helped him so much academic-wise, and he is rested. We all need rest to do our best. And being off the 405, and all of it, has been a big stress reliever for me."

A small rent increase was required of her to

move to her 2-bedroom in Santa Monica, but she was happy to pay it to leave her 1-bedroom in a neighborhood where her car window had been smashed in, her house had been burgled, and her mornings and evenings with her son were basically spent in the car. The dinner-homework-bath interval ended with a 10:30 p.m. bedtime instead of 8:30.

Then in the morning, wake him too early and rush, rush, rushing him out the door when he was only in kindergarten.

"To get the chance to move back home, the extra rent is totally worth it. I save on gas getting to work. I always felt, if I was too far from his school, what if something happened? I was an hour away. Also as long as it helps Carlos out, I'm willing to pay more."

She has been with Fred Segal for five years and manages part of the sales floor as well as working in shipping and receiving. Her boss will let her take a short time off to attend a conference with a teacher, or a school activity. She does not have to spend weekends at work away from her son.

Carlos now lives near his cousins and doesn't need to share the bedroom with his mom. Christina looked at apartments in the \$900 to

\$1,000 range in Santa Monica, but they were studios that she felt would not be a good fit for her child.

"We had to share a room for so long, at first I would wake up at night and it was weird, I'd think something was missing! It helped him to gain a little more confidence and independence to have his own room, and he's getting to the age where he needs that. I've been on the CCSM list for years, and I just never gave up. I never wanted Carlos to be one of those kids where he lived way over there, far away from the school. The commute was really, really hard.

"Plus where I lived North Hollywood, I was always waiting for something bad to happen. It was one thing after another, and making me an unhappy person."

Now both she and her son feel more safe, and secure. He even sleeps more soundly.

"We get to do so much more now. We get along so much better. There are kids in our building he can play with on the patio. We can ride our bike and walk to various places. Moving back to Santa Monica has made our lives more eventful - there are opportunities - the Pier, the parks - I grew up here, so I am familiar with where we can safely go.

"To me, this is home."

Groundbreaking process

Can you even still imagine a four-bedroom apartment in Santa Monica?

As cranes and bulldozers scurry around in the bottom of giant construction craters along Main Street, residents of Santa Monica contemplate 200 new residential units being added within the next year.

Among them, CCSM will provide a balance, bringing among the high-end boutiques, commercial-retail names and trendy cafes, a place of community for working families who need housing in this city.

Community Corporation prevailed in the longest community process in its history to see ground broken on its upcoming development at Pacific and Main in Ocean Park, where 44 families will have affordable rents in two-, three-, and yes, even four-bedroom apartments.

It was CCSM board member Beth Leder-Pack who dreamed that this large, flat lot in a prominent Santa Monica spot - and one of the last large pieces of vacant land remaining in the City at that time - could become a home for people who live and work in moderate- and low-income brackets in Santa Monica.

CCSM first proposed to buy the site in 1994. Seven years later in 2001, Executive Director Joan Ling finally cinched the deal with its Chinese owner via traditional protocols. The negotiation was not fast, but ended successfully.

Yet the work had only begun.

While the market-rate developers at Main and Marine streets, and at the huge former Boulangerie site a scant block away, went almost entirely unopposed, residents questioned placing

affordable housing in a prime location, and a long and hard-fought community debate ensued.

Four years later, after a number of hearings and community meetings almost as numerous as the proposed number of units, Main & Pacific was a deal. Even those who initially said they would back the development if only its income threshold were pushed higher, were part of a series of resounding approval votes at the community design, neighborhood committee, Planning and City Council levels.

"We're thrilled to be finally getting started," said Brent Eckerman with the architecture firm Frederick Fisher Partners. "The really hard part, of getting through the City and all its approvals, is done. When we got that building permit, I kicked up my heels."

Housing Development Director Sue Keintz dogged every meeting, responded to every community request, kept tabs on the city's and state's development approval process, and quietly and effectively took the project from an idea to construction start. Project manager Robin Raida penned all the financing applications, dealt with all the twists and turns in the construction market place, and led many lenders and investors and their attorneys to the closing table for the start of construction.

Main and Pacific will offer underground parking for its residents and an international design of similar height to the buildings it faces on Main, while within its courtyard, maintaining a homey "bungalow" feeling with a place for children to play, and walkways between its cluster three- and four-story buildings.

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“What we tried to do was break into five separate, smaller buildings, and make more open space,” Eckerman said. “We think it will be really sensitive to the neighborhood in a way that is set back on Pacific, yet has more of an urban feeling on Main, coming right up to the streetfront.

“The courtyard is very important. We’re glad we were able to keep it as large as we have, despite the pressure to push space to the building’s outside, and that we were able to maintain this courtyard for the kids to play in and create sort of a meeting and community area in the center of the project. This way people can be more protective of their families, and all the windows look out into the courtyard. We’re so happy that element didn’t have to go away in the community process.”

While the building is mostly white, it will sport two red towers, pale green trim, putty-colored accents, and metal panel walls on the fourth

floor which Eckerman said were all designed to provide variety in the way the different parts of the complex look, and add some color and liveliness to the north end of Main Street.

“A lot of people don’t know this, but we did the building across the street in the ‘90s, and we have mirrored some of the details. It will create a gateway as you enter Main Street from the north.” Exposed rafter tails, roofline and stucco elements are some of the items that were “mirrored” for this design effect.

Inside, the apartments will range from 600 to 1,200 square feet. The projected completion is 2006.

“This will house the people who care for your children, cook your food and work in area businesses,” Ling said. “They contribute to the social fabric of the community, and allowing them to live in the same community they work in is a benefit to everyone. We are very proud to be in a position to offer this to families.”



This is a rendering of the building, center, that is under construction by CCSM at Main and Pacific streets in Ocean Park.

After-school options for your student

HOMEWORK ASSISTANCE	CONTACT	DAYS & HOURS	COST	SUBSIDY	TRANSPORTATION
1 Boys & Girls Club* 1238 Lincoln Blvd.	Nano Guerra 393-9629	Mon. - Fri. 2:30 - 7pm Sat. 10am - 3pm Summer, Holidays and School Breaks 8am-6pm	\$20/yr.	Possible (ie.Volunteer for 5 hrs.)	\$200 /yr
2 WISE America Reads	WISE Suzanne Pennoyer 394-9871 X452	Mon. - Fri. 3 - 6pm Reading for elem. grades only <i>Referrals for middle school</i>	Free	N/App.	No
3 JAMS Teen Center * 2425 16th St.	Monica Simon 399-5865 x 534	1 on 1 tutoring available off site onlyHomework, Snack, Arts & CraftsVarsha Pattel	3 days/wk \$132 mo. 5 days/wk \$221 mo.	Yes	N /App
4 Santa Monica Library <i>Fairview Branch</i> 2101 Ocean Park Blvd.	Sylvia Anderle 450-0443	Youth Technology Ctr. Mon. - Thurs. 3:30 - 8pm 4th - 12th grade 5th - 12th grade for Reports Youth Computer Classes Wed. 4 - 5pm	Free	N/App.	No
5 Santa Monica PAL* 1401 Olympic Blvd.	Kermit Cannon 458-8988	Mon. - Thurs. 2 - 6 pm All Ages	Free	N/App.	No
6 YMCA* 1332 6th St.	Joseph Taylor 393-2721 X 117	M-Fri 4-6 pm	\$2/day or \$20/month	Yes	No
7 YWCA* 2019 14th St.	Cassandra Black 452-3881	Mon. - Thur. 4 - 5:30pm	\$17/yr.	Yes	Yes Elementary only
8 College Culture Club at JAMS (Not Homework)	Keith Neal 458-8688	Thurs. 3:15 - 4:15?	Free		

*NOTE - THESE AGENCIES ALSO HAVE CRAFTS, GAMES AND RECREATION
Note: Hours reflect homework assistance schedule. Please check with the agency for full hours of operation.





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