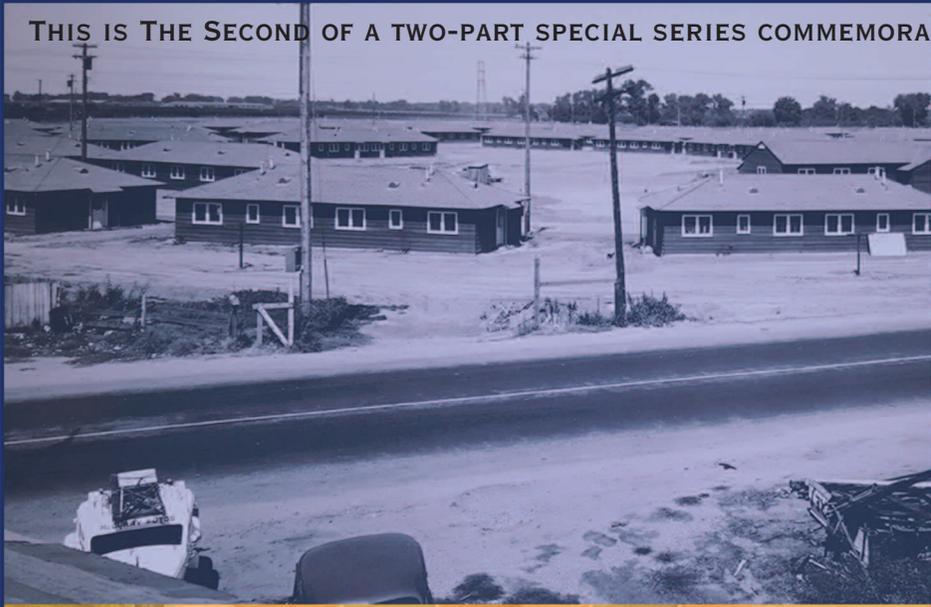


THIS IS THE SECOND OF A TWO-PART SPECIAL SERIES COMMEMORATING THE SACRAMENTO HOUSING AUTHORITY'S 80TH ANNIVERSARY



CHANGING LIVES FOR 80 YEARS



SACRAMENTO CITY AND COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY



 **SHRA**  
CHANGING LIVES

# Housing Programs Create Opportunity For Sacramento Residents

The federal government first began funding the public housing program in the 1930s to serve the working poor, revitalize slum communities, and provide jobs for laborers. Through the years, funding has been committed to support programs that provide more than a roof over a family's head. These programs are changing lives by helping work able residents chart a course to reduce dependency on public assistance and achieve their full potential.

## Breaking barriers to independence

Helping public housing residents move successfully on a path towards maintaining financial, housing, personal and family stability is the goal of Sacramento Housing Authority's Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency Program. A ROSS Service Coordinator assists residents in making progress by removing the educational, professional and health barriers they face.

## Setting goals for a better future

Buying a home, earning a college degree, purchasing reliable transportation, paying off debt, or taking a much deserved family vacation. These are some of the goals that residents set for themselves when they sign up for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. The FSS Program is an employment and savings incentive program for families that have

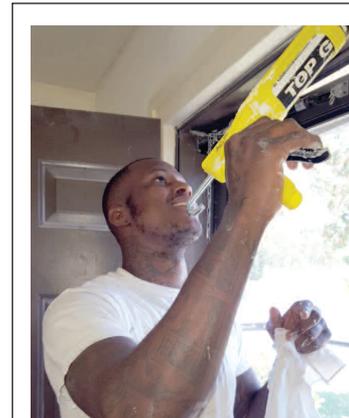
housing choice vouchers or live in public housing. Residents voluntarily participate and sign a five-year contract in which they agree to work toward leaving public assistance. While in the program, families can increase their incomes without increasing the amount they contribute toward rent. The difference between what the family paid in rent before joining the program and what they would owe as their income increases is deposited into an escrow account that the family can access upon completion of the contract.



**"This program has been instrumental in helping me in my quest to achieve self-sufficiency. Not too often do you find people who see how hard you're working to improve your situation and are willing to help you continue on your path to reach your goals." — Saretta Sutherland-Martin, FSS Graduate**

## Resident Training Program

Learning a trade or skill can lead to gainful employment and self-reliance for public housing residents. The Housing Authority uses a portion of capital funds to support a two-year on-the-job training program in clerical, janitorial, and painting professions. Residents also participate in workshops to learn soft and professional skills. The training provides a benefit for our residents and they in turn work as part of a team doing work that the Housing Authority would otherwise have to contract out with other vendors. The Agency is committed to linking jobs to the program and a number of resident



**"It's a pretty good program and the instructors are helpful and patient, and I see myself making a good career from this training." — Darrell High, Resident Training Paint Program**

trainees have become part of the SHRA workforce with full-time employment.

## Restoring dignity in service through housing

Since 1992, HUD has collaborated with the Veterans Administration to provide housing vouchers for homeless veterans with severe psychiatric or substance abuse disorders. Through the Veterans Administration Supported Housing (VASH) Program,

housing authorities administer the rental assistance vouchers enabling veterans to secure affordable housing for themselves and their families. Local VA medical centers provide case management and clinical services to participating veterans. Sacramento Housing Authority currently administers more than 660 VASH vouchers helping more veterans and their families who would otherwise experience homelessness and a difficult road to a stable living environment and better future.

# Public Housing Gave Supervisor's Family A New Start

By Angela Jones, SHRA Public Information Officer

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that living in public housing during early childhood helped shape Supervisor Phil Serna's view about the important role that affordable housing plays in helping families seeking a path to self-reliance. He was six months old when his parents moved to the New Helvetia public housing community on Broadway, also known as Seavey Circle and now called Alder Grove. It was the only place they could afford after they returned from serving in the Peace Corps in Central America.

"I don't know the whole story, but I do know we were poor. My father was completing his graduate studies and my mom was an aspiring graphic artist and we didn't have a pot to piss in, so we lived there."

Serna's earliest memory living at New Helvetia was sitting on the stoop with his parents in the summertime. He was about two and a half years old, too young to understand why they chose to live there. But later as a teen, he would come to understand more about what it meant to live at Seavey Circle, "The Bricks," as it was referred to back in those days.

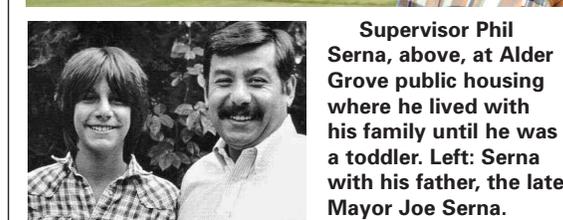
"There were times when we didn't have any income and we were using food stamps until I was in fourth or fifth grade. I thought all kids used food stamps and I didn't know what they were until kids began making fun of me. That is also when I learned how cruel kids could be making fun of people who lived in public housing."

His father, Sacramento's first Latino mayor, Joe Serna, Jr., who previously served 11 years on the City Council, was quick to educate Serna and his younger sister about how poor and destitute his family was as migrant workers in the Central Valley.

"I remember him taking us to some of the labor camps where he was a seasonal laborer and where they literally had dirt floors and corrugated tin walls, so even though we weren't raised in complete poverty, I grew up with a strong appreciation for that background, not taking things for granted."

Serna's father became a professor in the government department at Sacramento State University and began his first foray into public service as an appointee to the Sacramento Redevelopment Commission by then-mayor Phil Isenberg. His mother found work as a graphic designer at a screen printing company. Money was still tight, but they managed to leave Seavey Circle and rented a house in Curtis Park at 27th Street and 5th Avenue. By the time Serna was ready for college, his parents had already bought their second home. Public housing, he said, gave them the means to find their economic footing by completing their education and establishing themselves as professionals. Serna says food stamps and public housing were life support for many households, including his own, and that's still the case today.

"People struggle at times in their lives and they need that help, and once they're able to acquire an education and a profession in life, then perhaps they move out of public housing and it opens room for the next family to hopefully do the same things, right?"



**Supervisor Phil Serna, above, at Alder Grove public housing where he lived with his family until he was a toddler. Left: Serna with his father, the late Mayor Joe Serna.**

Serna considers himself to be in lockstep with other elected officials that are willing to champion the availability of a continuum of affordable housing which he says is one of the greatest challenges and responsibilities of all levels of government as a whole.

"And that is to make sure we're doing everything to keep housing as affordable as possible and to assist the construction and availability, and not

just one pathology of housing either." That continuum, according to Serna, should be first time ownership, first time renter, studio apartments and public housing which afforded his family to be part of the continuum.

Now in his third term, representing District 1 where he grew up gives Serna what he says is a strong connection, unique experience, and an inherent appreciation, "because I know the community like the back of my hand, what it looked like 45 years ago, the backstory about a lot of things in my district, and personal stories in the neighborhood." That includes his first job delivering The Sacramento Bee, working at Gunther's Ice Cream and at Corti Brothers.

"When you're fortunate to represent not just a constituency but a constituency that has always been your home, in many respects that's a rarity."

# Get A Sneak Peak At Sacramento's Newest Neighborhood, Marisol Village!

By Michael P Coleman

Very few not-for-profit agencies can accurately claim that they are in the business of lifting their constituents up figuratively and literally. With the new Marisol Village, the Sacramento Housing Redevelopment Agency is one of them.

For more than a decade, SHRA has held a vision to completely revitalize Sacramento's former Dos Rios public housing community, and to create a vibrant, green and sustainable neighborhood where one had never been. The Agency applied for and received several highly competitive Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grants from the U.S. Department Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which gave them the resources to actualize their vision: the new Marisol Village, comprised of a complete mixed-income housing neighborhood that would substantially improve the lives of its residents.

There were significant barriers that had to be overcome before SHRA could begin construction for the new neighborhood. Because of the sloping topography, the entire 22-acre site had to be lifted four feet before they could break ground on Marisol Village!

"It was a massive undertaking," remembers Tyrone Roderick Williams, SHRA's deputy executive director of development, with the heavy sigh of someone who has earned a bit of a break. "We also had to install huge underground detention basins that will be able to absorb all of the rain runoff from the site.

The costs of those aspects of the project are enormous, and most other projects in other cities across the country don't have to incur those costs on top of the state of California's inflated housing construction costs!"

"But Marisol Village is much, much more than the average project would entail."

While the former Dos Rios community was state-of-the-art when it was built in the 1940s, its units had undergone primarily cosmetic upgrades over the decades. Marisol Village's 487 new homes will be the heart of a vibrant neighborhood that will include a new Sacramento Regional Transit Light Rail Station and several other amenities, including resident community spaces,

a 1.2-acre community park, a 2/3-acre community garden and learning center, and a fruit tree orchard, along with a swimming pool, playgrounds, and walking paths.

The price tag on the new Marisol Village is a whopping \$380 million. The former 218-unit Dos Rios was built for just over \$400,000 — roughly the price of one four-bedroom house in Sacramento's current housing market! Unlike building a development of single family homes, SHRA is building a complete neighborhood literally from under the ground, up and out with housing to serve families at nearly every level of the income spectrum mixed throughout the community. Marisol Village will truly be an inclusive neighborhood with the same quality of life features that are part of other high quality communities throughout Sacramento—access to transportation, services, employment, and education opportunities that are the building blocks of healthy, thriving communities.

Another barrier to breaking ground on Marisol Village lay, literally, within the

homes of Dos Rios: what would become of the over 200 families who lived there, and where would they live while their former homes were being razed and Marisol Village was being raised?

As they have for 80 years, the SHRA team prioritized those residents, and

their needs, from the outset.

"Our commitment to our residents was that they would have the opportunity to make a choice as to where they would relocate," Williams said. "We gave them top priority for any empty public housing unit that we controlled, whether that was in the city or the county."

"We also allowed any resident the choice to accept a housing choice voucher, which allowed them to find a unit on the open market, anywhere in the United States. We provided money to cover deposits, or funding to help cover moving costs, regardless to whether they were moving into public housing in Sacramento, or a unit located across the state."



Construction has begun on Marisol Village with 487 mixed income units.



Marisol Village will feature a community park and garden, pool, playgrounds and walking paths. Courtesy McCormack Baron Salazar

"We also hired a relocation company to work with each family, in addition to the case management that members of our SHRA team was providing," Williams continued. "Most of the residents had three choices. They didn't get stuck with something; they chose something. We didn't force anyone into any living situation that they weren't comfortable with, and we provided the resources that it took to make their moves as smooth as possible."

Understandably, some of the residents of the former Dos Rios community were more skeptical than others about the new Marisol Village project. They were concerned that they might be giving up a long term home, and that promises made might not be kept.

Just as they would literally shift earth to raise the foundation of Marisol Village, SHRA moved heaven and earth to gain buy-in from their residents and earn their trust. The Agency took some of their residents out of town to speak directly with others who lived in mixed-income communities about their experiences of being relocated before moving into their current, revitalized neighborhoods.

"So many of our residents were skeptical, and they had every right to be," Williams said. "They had no reference. All they knew was they were going to have to move, and that where they were living was going to be demolished. We told them that they could come back to the new facility, and they were like 'Yeah, right.'"

"We took them to other projects in other cities, and we attended conferences with them so they could hear from other residents who had gone through the same process in other communities. They were able to come back to Sacramento and tell their neighbors and friends what they'd seen and experienced. It really made a huge differ-

ence."

"Our whole opportunity around redeveloping this neighborhood is to improve the lives of our residents," Williams insisted. "Whatever each family's specific needs are, we want to identify and secure the resources to empower them. It could be medical resources, job training, or job placement. If there are school aged children in the home, it could be helping our residents transition their kids from school to school, following up with their kids' teachers, or looking at after school activities."

"The goal is to empower those working-aged families to maximize the opportunity to become family self-sufficient. We don't want to have people involved in this process and not grow economically, if they are of working age. If they're seniors, we want to create opportunities to keep them actively engaged with a sense of renewed purpose."

"We're not just building buildings," Williams implored. "We're building people. We're building families."

Williams emphasized that, ironically, it takes a village to make a project like Marisol Village happen.

## DID YOU KNOW...

*When the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act merged the voucher and certificate programs in 1998, it renamed the voucher component of the Section 8 program to the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program.*

# SHRA Is Transforming The Way It Creates And Preserves Housing

By Michael P Coleman

The Sacramento Housing Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) has been providing a broad, diverse set of affordable, long-term housing options for the better part of a century. Over the next several years, Sacramento-area residents will notice lots of SHRA-led activity in and around our communities, resulting in new and improved homes for approximately 7,000 residents living in units owned, managed or maintained by the Housing Authority.

Mirasol Village, now under construction and due to become home to its first residents by the end of next year, is one of the latest manifestations of SHRA's ongoing mission. But the Housing Authority's efforts to revitalize communities don't stop with this redevelopment project, seeded with funding from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Utilizing another HUD initiative, the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program, SHRA has successfully entered into a private-public partnership with a property developer to improve 124 units within six of its existing housing developments in its RAD Pilot project. With the pilot as a template to convert the entirety of its Public Housing inventory, the Housing Authority will be able to provide affordable housing that is decent, safe, and sanitary — long into the future.

LaTanna Jones, SHRA's former Director of Housing, said that, unlike the Marisol Village project, the RAD program has a very different funding model.

"The Choice Neighborhood Initiative



**4500 Perry Avenue (shown above before rehab) is the first public housing community to undergo a major rehab under the RAD program. The renovations included improving the building envelope, drainage, parking lot, landscaping improvements; new windows, flooring, AC units; kitchen/bath improvements, and interior/exterior lighting. The families were relocated during the renovation and all have returned to new upgraded units.**



**Built in 1986, the property has 10 three-bedroom units within five buildings. The Housing Authority will rehab a total of 124 units in the City and County under the first phase of the RAD program.**

Program, which is what we're doing with Marisol Village, was extremely competitive," Jones said. "It was really challenging for SHRA to secure the funding to make that new neighborhood happen."

Jones says in contrast, the RAD program

doesn't come with money, but it does allow public housing units to be transferred to the Project Based Section 8 Program utilizing Housing Assistance Payment contracts. Moving them out of Public Housing and into private/public partnerships allows for debt to be leveraged on these properties to enhance them, which makes it possible to maintain the properties over the long term.

It is this long term maintenance that is so critical for SHRA and other housing authorities. History has shown that, without a sustainable funding model, public and subsidized housing units often fall into dis-

repair. While HUD had, as early as the 1940s, helped to provide affordable housing in Sacramento and across the country, the funding needed to maintain the number of supported units almost immediately surpassed HUD's allotted budget.

As the organization has always found solutions to problems, SHRA turned to the RAD program.

"We developed an asset repositioning plan over 10 years ago and updated it in 2018 when we decided to pursue the RAD program opportunity that HUD began offering to housing authorities," Jones said. "We completed a physical needs assessment on each of the properties to obtain an idea of the level of work that each of them needed."

"Based on the assessment, we determined financial strategies that will best serve those properties. We also looked at the extent of improvements needed for each property, and prioritized them."

With that plan in place, the Agency then developed a schedule for rehab and the conversion to the Section 8 platform. The first phase of the pilot program includes a small number of properties in Sacramento city and county public housing portfolios — a total of 124 units, which are currently under renovation with an anticipated completion date of Spring 2021. It may take up to 10 years to complete the rehab and conversion of the entire 2,200-unit portfolio, depending on the funding environment and other development factors.

In addition to the RAD program, SHRA is also implementing a HUD Section 18 program for 215 public housing units that are peppered throughout Sacramento County. According to Jones, the conversion of existing public housing units under Section 18 is considerably less complicated than those under the Housing Authority's RAD program.

"HUD's Section 18 program allows SHRA to convert units from standard public housing units to either the project based voucher platform or to market rate units," Jones said. "We decided to utilize the Section 18 program for every property with four units or less, including triplexes, duplexes, and single-family homes. Unlike the RAD units, the Section 18 units will not undergo renovation."

If you're wondering about that voucher platform, in addition to the thousands of homes that SHRA manages and maintains directly, the Housing Authority administers over 13,000 rental assistance vouchers each year for housing on the private market.

As Sacramento's housing landscape continues to evolve over the coming months and years, residents can feel proud of the transformative work that is being done by SHRA.



**Units after renovation.**

