

Celebrating Rolland Curtis Gardens - A Grand Opening

 abodecommunities.org/rcgstory

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Rolland Curtis Gardens models partnership and tenant organizing to preserve affordable housing near transit in a South Los Angeles neighborhood facing the pressure of gentrification

November 7, 2019 (LOS ANGELES, CA) — Residents, community members, partner organizations and civic leaders from across Los Angeles celebrate the grand opening of Rolland Curtis Gardens.

Sitting just 100 feet from the Expo Line Vermont Station at the University of Southern California, the affordable residential community includes an on-site community health clinic and a forthcoming



local market. Nonprofit developer Abode Communities and land steward T.R.U.S.T. South LA transformed a site that originally held only 48 apartments in disrepair into 140 affordable housing units, preventing a mass eviction of low-income residents facing the twin gentrification pressures of student housing and new transit construction.

“If we want to build a city where everyone can afford the rent, access public transit, and connect to jobs and opportunity, we have to invest in developments like Rolland Curtis Gardens,” said Mayor Eric Garcetti. “An affordable home can unlock possibility and prosperity for every Angeleno, and

today's opening is a sign of progress in our work to build a more livable, prosperous city.”

“Too many residents in the Eighth District are burdened by rental costs. I am committed to providing affordable housing for residents across South Los Angeles and these homes are an example of the types of developments families in South Los Angeles need. Affordable housing options change lives and ensure our communities can thrive,” said Los Angeles City Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson.

Preservation of affordable housing, especially near transit, is critical to addressing the regional housing crisis. Current statistics suggest that 721,000 households in Los Angeles are rent-burdened, and the county needs more than 516,000 units to meet demand.

Abode Communities received 3,000 rental applications for the 140 units, and a number of residents had struggled with homelessness.

“More than half of the people who became homeless for the first time this year in Los Angeles experienced economic hardship,” said Robin Hughes, President & CEO of Abode Communities. “Our 2,000-household waiting list at Rolland Curtis is a key indicator that we must do more to address our local housing crisis for hard-working people.”

“One day our lives changed,” said mother of four Johanna Blocker, who lived in a park and then homeless shelters before arriving at Rolland Curtis Gardens. “It’s home. I get to wake up in the morning and focus on getting my kids to school and I don’t have to worry about where we will sleep each night.”

In addition new residents like Ms. Blocker, nearly half of the residents of the original Rolland Curtis Gardens have returned. Many were deeply involved in the community organizing process that led to the preservation of the site.

In 2011, a new owner of the poorly-maintained 48-unit complex moved to transform the USC-adjacent property into market-rate student housing by issuing tenants 60-day notices to vacate. Intervention by community organizer and now land steward T.R.U.S.T. South LA, which was formed to remove property from the speculative real estate market and preserve housing affordability in perpetuity, elevated the voices of residents living on site. In 2012, T.R.U.S.T. South LA engaged nonprofit developer Abode Communities, who purchased the site for \$8.33 million and quickly began a community engagement process to empower residents in the planning and design of the development program, which now features a community health clinic and local market on site.

“T.R.U.S.T. South LA and Abode Communities brought us together and helped us understand our rights,” said artist David Mosely, a returning resident.

“Our goal is to stabilize individuals and families in high-quality affordable housing, and we cannot reach that goal without forming the deep partnerships that got us to this today,” said Hughes.

“These partnerships were key to combating displacement, nearly tripling housing density, and

delivering a high-quality standard of living to meet the demands of this treasured South Los Angeles Community.”

“The residents of Rolland Curtis Gardens fought to stay here and today, they can open nearly one hundred more front doors in South L.A.,” said Benjamin Torres, T.R.U.S.T. South LA Board Chair. “By keeping this property in a community land trust, we are making a promise to the next generation of Black and Brown families that we will continue to fight to create homes for you in South Central LA to challenge displacement and gentrification.”

“Get organized with the people who can help you,” said Mosely, the returning resident. “Don’t give up the struggle. You can be totally liberated from unjust living. Work with organizations like T.R.U.S.T. and Abode for your betterment and the betterment of your community.”

Residential Program

- 138 affordable family homes
- Two (2) manager’s units
- 114 resident parking spaces
- 154 long-term bicycle spaces
- Resident center
- Social service programming
- Tot lot, community garden, barbecues

Housing Affordability

- 30% – 60% Area Median Income
- \$29,070 – \$58,140, family of four
- One-bedroom: \$545 – \$1,091
- Two-bedroom: \$654 – \$1,309
- Three-bedroom: \$756 – \$1,512

Commercial Program

- 6,500 square foot Federally Qualified Health Center
- 1,500 square foot market/cafe
- 16 visitor parking spaces
- 12 short-term bicycle spaces

Commercial Program

- Primary medical care
- Well child care
- Preventative health services
- Dental services
- Behavioral health services