



# FY16 San Juan Office Highlights

OCTOBER 2016

**HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all**

## Message from Our Field Office Director

Fiscal Year 2016 was characterized by enormous economic challenges as well as noteworthy achievements on behalf of our stakeholders and the HUD San Juan Field Office. These are extraordinarily difficult times, which makes these achievements that much more remarkable. This past year we continued supporting the housing needs of Puerto Rico through our housing programs like Section 8 and FHA insurance, funding for new housing developments and community planning, as well as providing excellent customer service and technical assistance to our stakeholders. In this newsletter you will be able to read about some of these achievements, which bring us closer to fulfilling our mission:

To build sustainable and affordable housing free of discrimination that personally touches and improves the lives of those we serve. While there remains much more work to be done in the year ahead, it is gratifying to recognize that we have positive momentum going forward as we continue to collaboratively work with our partners and those we serve. We hope these articles invite you to learn more about HUD programs, and how we can work together to continue providing opportunities and affordable housing for our families.



*Efraín Maldonado, Esq.  
Field Office Director*



## Olga De La Rosa – New CPD Director

Ms. De La Rosa began his position as the Director of the Community Planning and Development Division in San Juan, Puerto Rico in December 2015. She was the acting CPD Director for several months and has served as the CPD Program Manager since 2013. Prior to coming to the San Juan CPD Office, Olga served over four years as a CPD Specialist and as a CPD Representative in the CPD Office in Jacksonville, Florida. Prior to joining HUD in 2009, Olga was a Program Manager for the Puerto Rico Housing Finance Authority, where she managed federally assisted troubled housing projects.

Olga earned her Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Design in 2002 and her Masters of Architecture Degree in 2004, both from the University of Puerto Rico. She was also awarded an A.S. Degree in Computer Sciences from Bayamon Technological University College – University of Puerto Rico.

## Out of the Box – Climate Change Adaptation



Climate-related risks are rapidly increasing. These risks are compounded where there is aging infrastructure and as our population becomes more urbanized. Furthering Secretary Castro's mission for HUD to deal with climate-related impacts to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities, and quality affordable homes for all Americans, HUD's Community Planning and Development team in Puerto

Rico recently held the Climate Change Adaptation Workshop.

The one-day interagency event discussed topics such as planning green infrastructure and food sustainability. Presentations were delivered by HUD staff, US Department of Agriculture, US Environmental Protection Agency, Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources, and Municipal Affairs Commissioner's Office. Emphasis was given on how to use HUD community development and affordable housing programs and funds for activities that will assist to adapt and become more resilient. Tips and best practices for water management in instances of urban flooding, drought and/or intense precipitation events and pest control among others were provided. A topic that garnered plenty of interest was housing rehabilitation with water/ sewer connection projects to help address combined overflows. The audience was comprised of HUD grantees that were appreciative of the information provided, and eagerly shared experiences and adaptability to "think out of the box".

## New Eco-friendly Supportive Housing for the Homeless in Caguas, Puerto Rico

An eco-friendly and sustainable housing project, Lucero del Alba, has been developed for former homeless individuals in Caguas, Puerto Rico. Lucha Contra el Sida, Inc. (LUCHA), a Community Housing Development Organization, began construction in December 2013.

Among the 50 (1 BR) housing units distributed in two buildings, Lucero del Alba has five units fully equipped for persons with disabilities; three of them for persons with mobility problems, and two units designated for persons with hearing loss. The development provides in-house supportive services offices for medical, psychological, social and family support. Moreover, a recreational area with an arcade is available near the administrative offices, security areas and maintenance areas.

In addition, Lucero del Alba has incorporated water-efficient practices by recycling rain water through its Detention Pond (rain water control) to irrigate the green areas and its electrical rooms.

This housing complex received a total of \$9,632,077 including funds from the Supportive Housing Program, HOME, and Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs.

**[HUD's Policy Statement for Climate Change Adaptation](#)**

## Brand New Housing for Seniors in Utuado

Low-income seniors from the central mountain town of Utuado are enjoying brand new affordable, eco-friendly housing.

The ribbon cutting ceremony recently took place to celebrate that 32 seniors with wide smiles moved into the property developed by Pathstone CDC de Puerto Rico. They are now enjoying comfortable apartments, community room, laundry, supportive services and its convenient location, since Valle Dorado is near stores and government offices.

Total cost for the project was \$6.5 million, of which HUD provided financing of \$5.3 million from the **Supportive Housing for the Elderly Capital Advance program**, \$500,000 in **HOME program** funds administered by the Puerto Rico Housing Finance Authority and it has a rental assistance contract. Property owners obtained additional funds from the Federal Home Loan Bank, Banco Popular de Puerto Rico, FIDEVI and PathStone Corporation. The construction phase generated over 100 jobs.

The new elderly development was welcomed in the community. A market study performed prior to construction indicated that 40 percent of Utuado households have a member who is over 65 and 46 percent live under poverty levels.

HUD Field Office Director Efraín Maldonado indicated HUD wanted to serve this area of the island to stimulate local economy. "HUD's support increases affordable housing for seniors of low income. Our efforts continue to strength the quality of life of Puerto Ricans and brings opportunities to those who need it the most," said Maldonado.

## All Grantees Meeting

Last April, our Community Planning and Development staff held its all grantee meeting. Packed with an attendance of over 100 people, a session on the Equal Housing Rule was delivered by TA providers and HUD staff. We were honored to have Deputy Assistance Secretary for Special Needs, Ann Oliva, joined us.



Valle Dorado--brand new senior housing in Utuado.



Thirty-two low-income seniors are now enjoying affordable, eco-friendly housing in Utuado.



## Roll up Your Sleeves – It's Rehab Time!

The HUD San Juan Field Office is partnering with the Puerto Rico Community Foundation (PRCF), community-based non-profits, and industry experts to rehabilitate foreclosed properties and offer them at reasonable prices to low-income families. There is a robust inventory of foreclosed properties from local banks where the non-profits can negotiate prices, as well as FHA properties that are acquired through a bidding process. This helps local communities by reducing the negative effects that a foreclosed property entails, and also helps families that otherwise would not be able to purchase their own homes. This initiative is backed by funding provided by the PRCF for technical assistance to help the non-profits throughout the process planning, acquisition, and rehabilitation processes.



Nonprofit organizations explore options to acquire, rehabilitate and help families become first time homeowners.



Local leaders join resources to improve communities with lingering foreclosed properties.

HUD and the stakeholders participating in the initiative recently held a conference called "Junte de Vivienda." Non-profit organizations received valuable information about HUD programs that could be used to purchase HUD homes, properties that have been conveyed back to the Department and that can be acquired at attractive discounts; they also learned about FHA products that would assist these organizations. The HUD team in San Juan offered technical assistance to these non-profits and guidance as they apply to the FHA programs. Other agencies supporting the initiative were USDA-Rural Development, the National Development Council, Enterprise Community Partners, and experienced Community Housing Development Organizations. At the end of the conference the non-profits had a "Fishing a Deal" session where they had one-on-one sessions with the federal and local agencies to discuss technical issues as well as more organization-specific concerns.

The initial goal was to rehab 14 properties; at the end of the event 29 were in the process of acquisition and rehab. Their future first time homeowners will be making affordable payments that allow for a better quality of life. It was a good day and a promising prospect for better communities. This is what HUD is all about!

Atlanta Homeownership Center  
Five Points Plaza  
40 Marietta Street  
Atlanta, GA 30303-2806

**Toll Free Customer Service:** (800) 225-5342 or (800) CALL-FHA

## HUD Caribbean Office of Public Housing Wins Several Secretary's Awards 2016

Congratulations to the HUD Caribbean Public Housing team in Puerto Rico. They won three of the 2016 Secretary's Awards! Their Director, Antonio Córdova, was named Manager of the Year and also received the Award for Excellence; and the entire team was awarded the Outstanding Customer Service Award.

The Caribbean Office of Public Housing is a dynamic group of individuals who are committed and devoted to providing excellent customer service and positively impacting the people in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The team works diligently to raise the bar in the quality of service provided to agency partners to provide opportunities, improve lives, and help strengthen communities.

For their Outstanding Customer Service Award, kudos to: Robert Lugo, Velma Byron, Domingo Garcia, Blanca Rosario, Juan O. Rodríguez, Nilsa Negrón, Jennifer Rodríguez, Damaris Santiago, Juan M. Rivera, Pedro Mora, Jesús Giménez, Amabelle Aponte and Jaqueline Ruiz.

The employees and the projects celebrated truly exemplify the extraordinary caliber of work and dedication of HUD employees. The award winners, representing 64 regional or field offices and seven program areas, were recognized for their achievements across seven categories. To view more pictures of the ceremony and awardees, visit the HUD [Flickr](#) page.



Antonio Córdova, Manager of the Year and recipient of the Award for Excellence, with Secretary Julián Castro and Deputy Secretary Nani Coroletti.



Representatives of the HUD Caribbean Public Housing team received the Outstanding Customer Service Award on behalf of their team. From left, Antonio Córdova, Blanca Rosario, Roberto Lugo, Amabelle Aponte and Jesús Giménez.



## Summer Job Tour for Puerto Rico Public Housing Teens

As part of the White House Youth Summer Opportunity Initiative, a group of nearly 50 teens from various housing projects around Puerto Rico toured the offices of the Puerto Rico Public Housing Administration on June 20th. Guided by Services Director Ramón Calzada and his team, the teens visited each program area while the employees described their duties, what types of tools or special resources they need to get the job done, and the academic preparation required for the different jobs.



Employees described their duties, tools and special resources they need to get the work done, and the academic preparation required for the different jobs.

The youth showed genuine interest in learning about the different aspects of the operation, many times unaware of all the different services and behind-the-scenes work that go into providing safe and decent housing in the island's 230 public housing projects.



As part of the White House Youth Summer Opportunity Initiative, a group of teens from various housing projects around Puerto Rico toured the offices of the Puerto Rico Public Housing Administration.

This unique opportunity afforded the teens a glimpse into the professional world and gave them concrete examples of what it takes to excel in public service. After visiting the employees, touring the building, program areas, and hearing words of encouragement from HUD's Field Policy and Management analyst Sasha Dávila, the students gathered in the Administrator's Office to learn about the latest initiatives.

The most interesting for them were the Digital Community Libraries and CRECEMOS ("we grow together"), which provide support services from the time a child is in the womb all the way to college. Young expectant mothers receive parenting classes and, once the child is born, it supports the academic and social wellbeing of the children. Services include tutoring, afterschool activities, developmental therapies, and even College Board reviews.

The day ended with a delicious lunch and a workshop with motivational speaker Dr. Marta Michelle Colón, a psychologist who guided the participants in an exercise of self-discovery as to what profession they might be interested in pursuing.

[Summer Opportunity Project - White House Gallery](#)

## HUD Secretary Castro Visits Puerto Rico

Last May the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julián Castro traveled to Puerto Rico for a series of events to discuss affordable housing strategies, economic development, and the Obama Administration's efforts to combat the threat of the Zika virus on the island. Joining Secretary Castro throughout the week were Puerto Rico Governor Alejandro García Padilla and Alberto Lastra, Secretary of Housing of Puerto Rico.

While in Puerto Rico, Secretary Castro announced HUD will be investing \$200 million to help develop and rehabilitate 750 units of affordable housing in seven locations across the island. The investment will be made in support of the Puerto Rico Comprehensive Housing Plan, which is a 10-year effort with the Puerto Rico Department of Housing that will ultimately develop or rehabilitate 10,000 units of housing.

"We want to send a direct message to the people of Puerto Rico: we believe in you, we believe in your future, and we want to support you as you write your comeback story," Secretary Castro said at the announcement event. "The announcement represents another important step in lifting up the people of Puerto Rico. And HUD is going to continue working with the Governor, the Secretary of Housing Alberto Lastra Power, and a coalition of local leaders to do whatever it takes to get the job done. Puerto Rico is, and always should be seen as an asset to our nation's future. Let's work together to ensure that this future puts opportunity within reach of every American."

Also joining for a portion of the visit to Puerto Rico were: Jose Calderon, President, Hispanic Federation; Robert Maldonado, President, Hispanic National Bar Association; Janet Murguia, President and CEO, National Council of La Raza; and Brent Wilkes, Executive Director, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). The delegation participated in briefings on Puerto Rico's debt crisis, the fight against Zika virus, and affordable housing strategies.

In an effort to learn more about Zika virus protection in public housing, Secretary Castro later visited with an expectant mother and her family living at the Residencial Ernesto Ramos Antonini housing development. In February, President Obama submitted a funding request to Congress for emergency supplemental funding to fortify the Administration's efforts to combat the virus. Congress is currently considering proposals to provide the people of Puerto Rico with resources to fight the spread of the disease.

[Click here](#) to view and download the full album of photos from Secretary Castro's visit.



Above: HUD Secretary Julián Castro hears from Puerto Rico Housing Secretary Alberto Lastra about efforts to combat Zika virus in public housing while visiting with an expectant mother and her family. In February, the Obama Administration requested \$1.9 billion in emergency funding from Congress to fight Zika. Photo by HUD Public Affairs. [Full album here.](#)

## HUD's Fair Housing Decision Upheld by First Circuit Court of Appeals

*San Juan, Puerto Rico, Condo Association Discriminated Against Resident with Disabilities*

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development won an important Fair Housing Act victory in the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. The decision upheld a Final Order of the Secretary of HUD following a trial before an administrative law judge that a condominium association discriminated against a resident with disabilities by refusing to allow him to keep an emotional support animal. [The First Circuit's decision is available here.](#)

The Fair Housing Act requires that housing providers, including condominium and homeowners associations, grant reasonable accommodations to rules, policies, or practices when such accommodations are necessary to afford a person disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing. This includes waiving "no pet" rules to allow emotional support animals.

"The decision is a victory for HUD, but an even greater victory for people with disabilities," said Gustavo Velasquez, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "Not only does the decision reaffirm HUD's authority to vigorously enforce the Fair Housing Act, it also reinforces the importance of protecting the rights of residents with disabilities to have the reasonable accommodations they need."

In October 2014, HUD found that the Castillo Condominium Association, located in San Juan, Puerto Rico, violated the rights of a homeowner with disabilities by refusing to allow him to keep an emotional support animal as a reasonable accommodation to the Association's "no pets" policy. HUD ordered the Association to pay \$20,000 in damages to the victim, who was forced to sell his condominium and find alternative housing as a result of the Association's discriminatory conduct. HUD also ordered the Association to pay a \$16,000 civil penalty.

The Association appealed the order to the First Circuit. On May 2, 2016, the Court of Appeals ruled against the Association, affirming HUD's finding that the Association violated the Fair Housing Act and ordering the Association to pay the damages and penalty.

In fiscal year 2015, disability was the most common basis of fair housing complaints filed with HUD and its partner agencies, being cited as a basis for 4,548 complaints, or nearly 55 percent of the overall total.

### [Read HUD's notice regarding service or companion animals.](#)

People who believe they have experienced discrimination may file a complaint by contacting HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 927-9275 (TTY). Housing discrimination complaints may also be filed by going to [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing), or by downloading HUD's Fair Housing mobile app, which can be accessed through Apple and Android devices.





## Puerto Rico PHAs Get Trained

Last June was a great month for the San Juan Office of Public Housing. Nine training sessions were completed to all seventy eight (78) PHAs in Puerto Rico. The training sessions started on June 1st and were held in the San Juan HUD Field Office Training Center to 220 staffers from all 78 PHAs. The San Juan Office Training Team developed a presentation and discussed key learning points addressing how to effectively apply recently adopted Portability HUD New Rules. A separate session was held for the HUD Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) System, showing how to effectively monitor PHA's participants' data of debts owed to PHAs and terminations module and all the verification reports as well. Kudos for the San Juan Office Training Team, Blanca Rosario, Damaris Santiago, Jenniffer Rodriguez and Robert Lugo!!!!



## Training in the Territory of the USVI

Last August, Velma Byron, Division Director provided an Operating Subsidy Update training to the Virgin Islands Housing Authority (VIHA) team to prepare the PHA team to improve in the quality of future operating subsidy submission to the Field Office and in the afternoon the team discussed the self-directed Energy Performance Contract. First, Velma Byron, Division Director, Blanca Rosario, PHRS and [Amabelle Aponte](#) conducted an Operating Subsidy Briefing & Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) training in collaboration with Lydia Pelle, Chief Operating Officer of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. The training was presented to 50 VIHA staff from various aspects of the PHA operation to include Executive staff, asset management, maintenance foreman, modernization, leasing and finance. The objective of the training was for the PHA team to visualize how daily operation impacts VIHA's final score, relate the importance of efficient and effective operation the PHAS score. The VIHA team was very motivated and energized to see the progress already made in the improvement in the PASS score and actions taken to increase rent collections. The FO is pleased to experience the continued level of professionalism of the VIHA team and encouraged the PHA to continue to reevaluate the plan on a regular basis and adjust the plan to overcome any challenges. Later, on September, the HUD Caribbean Office conducted an environmental training for the Virgin Islands Housing Authority and the Virgin Islands Finance Authority to explain the environmental review process and role of the responsible entity. During the afternoon session VIHA and VIHFA representatives explained the protocol the Virgin Islands will utilize for the environmental review processing. Due to the high cost of travel to the Virgin Islands it is not always possible to have the HUD resources physically at the PHA so it is necessary to utilize technology to maximize our opportunity to continue to provide critical training to our PHAs. [Amabelle Aponte](#), Public Housing Engineer conducted the training on St. Thomas and [Elinson Acosta](#), CPD Representative, Roberto Cortes, Field Environmental Officer and Velma Byron, Division Director joined the training via teleconference and go-to meeting. The VIHA staff on St. Croix joined the meeting via video conferencing.

This is teamwork in motion between HUD and our stakeholders in the Virgin Islands.

## Basketball Fever in the USVI

The Virgin Islands Housing Authority launched the "Free Your Mind Basketball League." VIHA's Basketball League is the brain child of the St. Thomas District Manager, Carolyn C. Duncan. Recently, the

Virgin Islands experienced a severe increase in crime not only in public housing communities, but the territory on a whole. Mrs. Duncan recognized that there is a severe lack of programs and activities for at risk young males between the ages of 15 and 21, when they are most vulnerable. See the attached articles and photos from the Basketball League. Kudos to VIHA's team for making a difference and positively impacting the youth that we serve.



## Community Gardens Initiative

Watch out! Last summer, community gardens popped up in four (4) HUD-assisted multifamily housing developments in St. Croix: Flamboyant Gardens, Water Gut Homes, Bethlehem and Profit Hills.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, Food Nutrition Service, the University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Services and the V.I. Department of Agriculture worked together in this initiative. Each property received a grant in the amount of \$1,000 from the US Department of Agriculture. Farmers helped community members select garden sites, as well as, design and install the gardens. Among other things, people learned how to plant, irrigate, mulch and compost.



## Lead Based Paint Hazards

Michelle Miller, Deputy Director of the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Health Homes recently visited Puerto Rico to provide technical assistance on Lead Based Paint to our stakeholders. Topics such as Lead Safe Homes Lead Free Kids Toolkit, Lead Safe Housing Rule Review, Lead Disclosure Rule Review; Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule Review; Proposed Revisions to the Lead Safe Housing Rule, and Enforcement Hot Topics were discussed.

A similar visit to the Territory of the US Virgin Islands is being coordinated for Fiscal Year 2017.



### Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (OLHCHH)

The [Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes](#) (OLHCHH) provides funds to state and local governments to develop cost-effective ways to reduce lead-based paint hazards. In addition, the office enforces HUD's lead-based paint regulations, provides public outreach and technical assistance, and conducts technical studies to help protect children and their families from health and safety hazards in the home.

▶ The **Lead Programs Enforcement Division** ensures regulatory compliance with the Lead-Based Paint Disclosure Rule and the Lead Safe Housing Rule.

The **Programs Division** provides program management, oversight and technical assistance of **OLHCHH's grant programs**.

▶ The **Regional Management and Technical Services Division** provides program and technical support to our grantees and stakeholders. Each of these individuals works in a HUD field office as a regional point of contact on issues and activities.

▶ The **Grant Services Division** provides the overall supervision of the grant's management life cycle. This consists of administrative, negotiation, awarding, ensuring compliance to meet federal regulations or agency policies, financial audits, regulatory review and award closeout for the OLHCHH's grant and cooperative agreement.

▶ The **Policy and Standards Division** develops healthy homes guidelines and standards, oversees research studies, and provides technical assistance on policy issues for OLHCHH and other HUD Program Offices.



**Did you know that the FHA Resource Center is available to answer your questions about the full range of FHA related programs? They can let you know the basics about FHA financing; tell you about new FHA programs that allow you to purchase a new home or fix up an existing one; give you information about FHA property and qualifying requirements, or provide referral information for local housing programs and support in your area. The FHA Resource Center is available by telephone at 1-800-CALLFHA (open 8-8 Eastern); by email at [answers@hud.gov](mailto:answers@hud.gov); or [on the web](#)**

### **Contact Our Office**

*We're on the Web!*

**Send comments, ideas, or suggestions to:**  
[SJUOutreach@hud.gov](mailto:SJUOutreach@hud.gov)

## **A Year in Review**

Monday, July 18, 2016

**HUD Awards \$141,000 to Provide Job Training and Employment to Low-Income Residents in Puerto Rico**

Monday, July 18, 2016

**HUD Awards \$69,000 to Provide Job Training and Employment to Low-Income Residents in the U.S. Virgin Islands**

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

**HUD Awards \$21,340 in Housing Counseling Grants in Puerto Rico**

Monday, June 6, 2016

**This June Marks the First National Healthy Homes Month!**

Monday, June 6, 2016

**Obama Administration names Roosevelt Roads as a Promise Zone Community**

Thursday, June 2, 2016

**HUD and VA Team Up to Find Permanent Homes for Five Homeless Veterans in the U.S. Virgin Islands**

Thursday, June 2, 2016

**HUD and VA Team Up to Find Permanent Homes for 23 Homeless Veterans in Puerto Rico**

Friday, May 20, 2016

**HUD Secretary Julián Castro Highlights Affordable Housing Strategies, Zika Virus Protection in Public Housing**

Wednesday, May 4, 2016

**HUD Allocates \$326,000 to Puerto Rico Through New Housing Trust Fund**

Monday, May 2, 2016

**HUD Awards \$76,000 for Local Homeless Programs in the U.S. Virgin Islands**

Monday, May 2, 2016

**HUD Awards \$1.6 Million for Local Homeless Programs in Puerto Rico**

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

**HUD Awards \$17.3 Million for Local Homeless Programs in Puerto Rico**

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

**HUD Awards \$39,177 for Local Homeless Programs in the U.S. Virgin Islands**

Friday, February 12, 2016

**HUD Awards \$104.7 Million to Improve, Preserve Public Housing in Puerto Rico**

Friday, February 12, 2016

**HUD Awards \$5.9 Million to Improve, Preserve Public Housing in the U.S. Virgin Islands**

Thursday, November 19, 2015

**Homelessness in Puerto Rico Rose 9 Percent in 2015**

Thursday, November 19, 2015

**Homelessness in U.S. Virgin Islands Fell 25 Percent in 2015**