



Sean Rogan
Executive Director

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
of the County of Los Angeles**

700 W. Main Street • Alhambra, CA 91801
Tel: 626.262.4511 • TDD: 626.943.3898 • www.lacdc.org

Hilda L. Solis
Mark Ridley-Thomas
Sheila Kuehl
Don Knabe
Michael D. Antonovich
Commissioners

ADOPTED

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

29 December 15, 2015

December 15, 2015

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012


PATRICK OGAWA
ACTING EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Supervisors:

**APPROVAL OF HOMELESS PREVENTION INITIATIVE FUNDS FOR CONTINUED OPERATION
OF THE INTERNET-BASED LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER
(ALL DISTRICTS) (3 VOTES)**

**CIO RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE (X) APPROVE WITH MODIFICATION ()
DISAPPROVE ()**

SUBJECT

This letter requests approval of three years of continued Homeless Prevention Initiative (HPI) funding for the uninterrupted operation of the Los Angeles County Housing Resource Center (Housing Resource Center) database website and associated housing locator services. This letter relates to an item on the agenda of the Board of Commissioners of the Community Development Commission (Commission) for approval of the related contract.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:

1. Approve an additional three years of HPI funding, at \$222,000 per year, to the Commission for the continued operation of the Housing Resource Center through a contract with Emphasys Computer Solutions, Inc. (Emphasys).
2. Find that this approval of HPI funding is not subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because the proposed activity is not defined as a project under CEQA and will not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

The purpose of the recommended actions is to approve the transfer of funding to continue uninterrupted operation of the Housing Resource Center website and Call Center.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The HPI ongoing funding in the amount of \$202,000 for the Housing Resource Center was approved by your Board in April 2006 using County of Los Angeles (County) general funds. This request will increase the annual HPI funding amount by almost 10 percent to adjust for cost increases in the project operation, resulting in an annual request of \$222,000 and a total three-year request of \$666,000.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

On April 4, 2006, your Board approved an HPI recommendation to establish a housing search and listing database website for the County. On December 19, 2006, your Board approved a joint recommendation submitted by the Chief Executive Office (CEO) and the Commission, delegating authority to the CEO to execute a sole source contract with Socialserve.com (Socialserve) to create a website called the Los Angeles County Housing Resource Center. The website was subsequently launched in June 2007.

The primary purpose of the Housing Resource Center website and Call Center support is to provide free listing services of residential rental properties in the County, to keep the listings updated, and to make the rental listings available at no cost for individuals, families, and housing caseworkers in the County via the internet or toll-free phone call. The listing information includes data on landlords who accept tenants with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Vouchers. The website also has additional information on special needs rental units to assist County departments and approved agencies with housing placement. The Housing Resource Center has proven to be very successful, and there are over 11,500 landlords registered with approximately 1,100 units currently available or with an open waiting list.

In 2009, the contract administration for the Housing Resource Center was transferred from the CEO to the Commission, and the Commission oversight continued the expansion of the current database and website with further development of the system. Commission staff manages the workflow of website changes, coordinates among stakeholder agencies, develops marketing material, manages passwords, and provides training on the website.

Following the County's receipt of federal stimulus and recovery funds for housing in 2009 and 2010, the Housing Resource Center was used to provide screening and mapping functions to assist users in evaluating eligibility for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP), and the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). Beginning in 2013, the Housing Resource Center has been used by agencies who are administering rapid rehousing assistance under the First 5 Supportive Housing for Families Fund.

Other notable improvements in the services and function of the website include registration of all Commission-funded affordable rental projects, with additional features to allow affirmative marketing of Commission-funded units with accessibility features for persons with physical or sensory disabilities. The Housing Resource Center is also designed to fully comply with federal accessibility standards for websites. This marketing of publicly-funded accessible units is a key component of compliance requirements for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Because Socialserve's data and support system covers all of the County, the Board of Supervisors previously authorized the execution of partnership agreements with other County municipalities in order to allow for shared postings of rental projects. The City of Pasadena has successfully maintained a partner website that is administered by Socialserve under a Participation Agreement with the Commission. Earlier this year, the Housing and Community Investment Department of the City of Los Angeles (HCIDLA) entered into a similar Cooperation Agreement and launched a website called www.housing.lacity.org, which is primarily used to register HCIDLA's funded multi-family rental projects. HCIDLA chose to partner with the Housing Resource Center primarily due to the website's ability to screen units for accessibility features. This partnership will significantly increase the number of rental listings on the Housing Resource Center and provide information and benefits to all County residents, as well as caseworkers and housing locators working for County programs or departments.

In November 2014, your Board approved an additional nine-month extension of the HPI funds in order to continue funding for the Housing Resource Center with a new contract expiration date of December 31, 2015.

In the spring of 2015, Socialserve informed the Commission that they were in negotiations with Emphasys that could lead to a change in business structure through an acquisition or merger. The two entities entered into an agreement on August 7, 2015, whereby Emphasys acquired the technology assets of Socialserve and became their parent company. Socialserve continues to operate as non-profit partner and affiliate of Emphasys. The continuity of operations has been seamless because key Socialserve staff involved with the Housing Resource Center were transferred to Emphasys, and the Housing Resource Center Call Center continues to be maintained and operated by Socialserve. A related item presented concurrently to the Board of Commissioners of the Commission recommends approval of a three-year sole source contract with two one year extensions for a total of up to a five year contract with Emphasys that would also include Socialserve to remain as a required subcontractor.

Because the Housing Resource Center has been marketed to the County's landlords and property owners since 2007, the number of property listings has greatly exceeded the volume caps included in the Service Level Agreement attached to the current, expiring contract that was executed in 2009. The current annual fee of \$202,000 was based off a maximum number of 18,000 (rental property) listings, with an allowance of 110 percent overage equal to 19,800 listings. Currently, the Housing Resource Center database contains over 29,000 listings, which equates to 160 percent of the approved volume cap. In order to accommodate the additional volume of property data generated by Los Angeles County, Emphasys has requested a 10 percent increase in the annual fee, which would raise the cost from \$202,000 to \$222,000 per year. Although there were short-term fee increases in 2009 – 2011 to accommodate the workload generated by the federal stimulus programs, this is the first general fee increase that has been requested, and the Commission believes it is a reasonable and justifiable increase.

It is believed that this partnership with HCIDLA will likely lead to increased Call Center volume from City of Los Angeles residents, therefore the Commission is in negotiations with HCIDLA to increase their funding under the Cooperation Agreement as a regional partnership contribution (in addition to Commission administrative fees) to help offset the rising costs of the Housing Resource Center operation. If an additional contribution is approved by the City of Los Angeles, the HPI funds requested herein would also be available to pay for direct costs for website improvements, marketing, and training, and help offset a projected year three operation deficit. All HPI funds will be used for project costs and not administrative costs. Any unused funds would be carried forward to use in future years funding for the service as applicable.

The Commission believes that the Housing Resource Center project could continue to provide cost-effective benefits and services to County residents for several years to come. The recommended length of the new contract, and related HPI funding, is three years, with a requested authorization for the Executive Director, or his designee, to extend the contract by up to two additional years, contingent upon funding availability. Funding for years four and five will be requested, prior to the expiration of the new contract. Approval of the recommended actions would extend the funding for the operation of the Housing Resource Center through 2018 and the contract authority through 2020.

The Chief Information Office (CIO) reviewed this Board letter and recommends approval. The CIO determined this recommended action contains no new Information Technology matters requiring an analysis.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The proposed transfer of funds is exempt from the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act pursuant to 24 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 58, Section 58.34 (a)(3) because it involves administrative activities that will not have a physical impact on, or result in any physical changes to the environment. The action is not subject to the provisions of CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines 15060(c)(3) and 15378 because it is not defined as a project under CEQA and does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

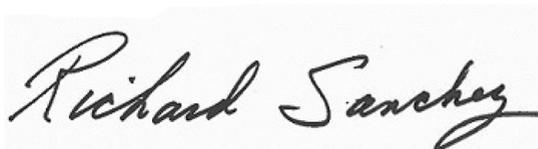
IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Approval of the recommended actions will enable the Housing Resource Center website and Call Center to continue providing services without interruption and enhance the ability of the Commission to provide housing information and referral services and benefits to residents of the County, including landlords and tenants, as well as housing locators, lending institutions, real estate professionals, veterans, and other providers of affordable, special needs, supportive, transitional, and emergency housing.

Respectfully submitted,



SEAN ROGAN
Executive Director



RICHARD SANCHEZ
Chief Information Officer