



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

*"Parks Make Life Better!"*

Russ Guiney, Director

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FITTED WITH STATE-OF-THE-ART THEATER ROOM,  
COMMUNITY CENTER HERALDS NEW DAY AT HELEN KELLER PARK**

***On Dec. 10, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
and the Department of Parks and Recreation will dedicate  
\$7.3 million facility with support from Hollywood studio and other partners.***

With a wide range of programs planned, a 4,000-square-foot community center at Helen Keller Park in South Los Angeles will open to the public on Wednesday, Dec. 10 at 3:30 p.m. Hosted by Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and the Department of Parks and Recreation, the grand opening celebration will be held outside the center located at 1045 W. 126<sup>th</sup> Street in Los Angeles.

At a park widely-recognized for a years-long series of film screenings provided to residents free of charge, amenities at the new Helen Keller Community Center include a state-of-the-art theater room with a 5 x 9 foot screen and surround sound. Also opening: a new computer lab, arts-and-crafts room, outdoor patio, staff offices, full kitchen and reception area.

"While construction at Helen Keller Park is underway, we want the West Athens community to start enjoying the community center during the holiday season," Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said. "We invite residents and visitors to explore this new amenity and participate in the vast array of activities that will be scheduled at the center."

Several programs and activities will be offered at the center, beginning this month with a series of holiday season-themed events. A slate of regular programming will kick off in January 2015, with such offerings as a low-cost afterschool program for children ages 6 to 12; job readiness training for adults; mentoring program for girls ages 12 to 17; a daily, fitness-focused walking club; youth computer class on Saturday mornings; arts-and-crafts for seniors; ballet, tap and jazz dance class; and basketball and track teams for boys and girls. For more information on programs at Helen Keller Community Center, call (323) 241-6702.

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Funded by Warner Bros., the technology in the 100-seat theater room will provide families with a welcoming, modern space to enjoy activities that include the film screenings hosted at Helen Keller Park in cooperation with the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Los Angeles (BAFTA Los Angeles). At the Wednesday afternoon community center opening, local children and their families will be treated to a showing of “The Lego Movie,” and kids will receive special gifts.

“Warner Bros. Entertainment is pleased to have provided a state-of-the-art projection and sound system for the Multi-Purpose/Screening Room at the Helen Keller Community Center,” said Mary-Elizabeth Michaels, Director of Community Affairs for Warner Bros. Entertainment. “We hope it provides years of enjoyment to families in the local community.”

Added BAFTA Los Angeles Chairman Nigel Daly, OBE: “BAFTA Los Angeles is deeply honored to be part of this exciting new development. Since 2005, our Inner City Screening program has inspired and captivated audiences throughout the County of Los Angeles, and by using the magic of film we have witnessed a genuine, positive impact on the local community and the families in the area of Helen Keller Park. This new facility will enable BAFTA's initiative to continue into the future, and expand its impact for the residents of our adoptive city.”

Reflecting Los Angeles County's strong commitment to energy efficiency, the new building is expected to achieve a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. A number of sustainable technologies and design elements — among them: reclaimed wood and locally-sourced materials used in construction, waterless and low-flow fixtures in restrooms, roof designed with reflective coloring to reduce heat absorption, and large windows to maximize natural light — make the center a prime example of environmental stewardship in an urban setting.

Due to extensive renovations underway at Helen Keller Park, most of its 6.6 acres of parkland are currently closed to the public. Along with landscaping, those improvements, expected to be completed in Winter 2015, include a new baseball field, playground, exercise cluster, sports lighting system and park monument sign; restoration of the south parking lot; new picnic tables, park benches and grills; and an American with Disabilities Act-accessible path of travel.

“The opening of the new Helen Keller Community Center is a milestone for the Department of Parks and Recreation and the community served by this park,” said Russ Guiney, the department's director. “While much of the park will be under construction for the next several months, this state-of-the-art center will enable our dedicated staff, volunteers and partners to deliver high-quality programming to a wonderful and deserving community.”