



DATE: April 25, 2024

TO: Honorable Members of City Council
c/o City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395

ATTN: Nithya Raman, Chair
Housing and Homelessness Committee

FROM: Douglas Guthrie, President and CEO, HACLA *Douglas Guthrie*
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SUBJECT: REPORT BACK ON COUNCIL FILE (CF) 24-0115 HACLA RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

SUMMARY

In response to the March 8, 2024, Council File (CF) 24-0115, this report provides the current maintenance and operation of the recreational facilities (inclusive of fields, courts, and community gardens) located at the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) sites citywide, *specific to where City-funded programming occurs*. There was a period of time when HACLA-owned recreational facilities were funded and managed by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and paid for by the City of Los Angeles. Due to budget cuts, City funding for these facilities was terminated in 2014. Subsequently, HACLA relies on outside providers to provide programming and funding for these facilities as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides no direct funding. Currently the City only provides funding for the recreational facilities at Nickerson Gardens and Imperial Courts through the Summer Night Lights (SNL) programming.

BACKGROUND

HACLA provides a wide range of recreation programs at all our large public housing sites with built in community facilities, including Estrada Courts, Ramona Gardens, and Pico Gardens (Council District 14); William Mead (Council District 1); Mar Vista Gardens (Council District 11); San Fernando Gardens (Council District 7); Imperial Courts, Nickerson Gardens, and Jordan Downs (Council District 15); and Pueblo Del Rio (Council District 9).

Current operations of these facilities are led by a variety of non-profit providers, including the West San Gabriel Valley and Santa Monica Boys and Girls Clubs, Red Eye, Los Angeles Metropolitan Church, Children Mending Hearts, and Proyecto Pastoral. These providers primarily offer recreational and enrichment programs to youth as well as tutoring and homework help year-round. Some of these providers have begun to expand into adult and senior services or partner with other providers to expand their service reach. Many of HACLA's sites have adjacent spaces we branded as Learning Labs which are used to improve digital equity, provide college-bound programming, and act as an outpost for the Watts/LA WorkSource Center, offering job placement and training. These Learning Lab spaces are

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currently overseen by HACLA's Strategic Initiatives team. The Learning Labs expand beyond these properties to other more limited facility sites at Avalon Gardens (Council District 9), Gonzague Village (Council District 15), and Rancho San Pedro (Council District 15).

Funding for long-term capital needs of HACLA's community and recreational facilities typically comes from competitive grants. HACLA does not receive enough operational or capital funding from HUD to ensure the long-term stability of these assets or provide the needed upgrades HACLA has identified in its Capital Plan. To date, HACLA has been successful in drawing on millions of dollars in public and private dollars to leverage our own resources and our operational partner organizations also make their own significant investment in these facilities.

As an example, currently both the Imperial Courts and Nickerson Gardens gyms and recreational facilities are undergoing extensive renovations.

Nickerson Gardens Recreational Facilities:

1. The Lakers and the Mamba and Mambacita Sports Foundations are currently transforming the inside of the basketball gym area with new murals, flooring, score board, basketball hardware, and paint. The lobby area of the gym is also being repainted and the two bathrooms will be rehabilitated by HACLA staff. Outside of the gym, these same foundations are renovating the basketball courts and skatepark. This should be complete by Summer 2024.
2. HACLA has also received funding amounting to over \$3.5 million from Proposition 68, U.S. Forestry, and Community Project Funding from Congresswoman Barragan to rehabilitate field area that has not been in use for years into a Central Park that will include a new playground, shaded seating, picnic areas, water fountains, a new field area for organized sports, and trees/plants. Construction is anticipated to begin in the Summer of 2024.
3. In March 2024, HACLA itself invested \$250,000 in a smaller park space and held a grand reopening of Nickerson's mini park. The park includes new trees, walkways, exercise equipment, drought tolerant plants and trees, and seating areas.
4. HACLA has received grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Congresswoman Barragan to renovate and program an adjacent community garden and is actively fundraising for an \$800,000 renovation of the Nickerson Gardens Learning Lab.
5. Lastly, in 2023, through the generous donation of private individuals of close to \$2 million, a new playground, water space, and adult exercise area was opened adjacent to the gymnasium.

Imperial Courts Recreational Facilities:

1. HACLA will redevelop a 2.4-acre open space site at Imperial Courts as part of the services provided by Red Eye at the Watts Empowerment Center. The new space will contain a large permeable plaza with shaded seating, picnic areas, multi-use field area, native plants, and a playground. HACLA is currently in the process of securing a design contract with an Architectural and Engineering firm for this \$4 million project. This renovation is being funded by various awarded grants including Proposition 68, Proposition A, California Arts Council (through Assemblymember Gipson's office), private donations, and Community Project Funding through Congresswoman Waters. Construction is projected to commence in January 2025.

2. HACLA received funding from private donations, the California Arts Council (through Assemblymember Gipson's office) and a generous allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the City of Los Angeles' to invest over \$2 million to build a new film and music studio adjacent to the gym. HACLA entered into an agreement with Red Eye for services and the purchase of necessary equipment related to the future studio and is currently in the design phase. The goal is to initiate construction in the first quarter of 2025.
3. HACLA will replace 2 roof areas in the front lobby and office areas at the Imperial Courts community center and gym utilizing grant funds through Proposition A. The estimated cost for replacement is approximately \$420,000. We anticipate the roofing work to commence in June 2024 and to be complete by July 2024. There is a need to also replace the other 3 remaining roofing areas which is estimated at \$200,000.

The March 8, 2024, CF 24-0115, specifically inquires about the maintenance and operation of recreational facilities located at HACLA sites where City-funded programming occurs. This represents only two of HACLA's fourteen large public housing at this time, as noted above. However, the maintenance and operational plans and approaches for those sites is fairly consistent with our approach to managing these facilities across the portfolio.

Maintenance. HACLA is primarily responsible for the maintenance of each facility and our contracted non-profit providers/operators are responsible for janitorial services and keeping the locations clean on a daily basis. Many providers have also successfully fundraised for major renovations and interior improvements at the recreational facilities as well during their tenure. The current amount HACLA allocates to maintain all recreational facilities is approximately \$470,000 annually. This estimated cost includes staff time, materials, and other vendor services and covers general landscaping, grounds upkeep, and minor repairs. The annual maintenance cost for the Nickerson Gardens gym and Alba Center is approximately \$140,000, Imperial Courts gym \$49,000, and Jordan Downs gym \$38,000. Additionally, throughout the year, other as needed and unforeseen major projects are needed at all recreational facilities. Unanticipated emergency repairs are covered separately on an as-needed basis and longer-term capital projects are wholly reliant on HACLA and our partner's success in receiving competitive grant funding. As can be deduced, the budget is highly limited and can create a backlog of long-term capital needs but the facilities continue to function as a critical space for our residents to connect to programming, sports, and enrichment.

Operations. Operations for the Recreation Centers are primarily funded by HACLA through PILOT funding, a return of funding under contract to the City through the City and HACLA's Cooperative Agreement. This amounts to approximately 1 million dollars a year for nine to ten sites, or \$100,000 on average per site. This highly limited budget is greatly leveraged by all our non-profit partners who typically raise an additional \$400,000 to \$1 million a year to cover their staff time, general janitorial services, capital expenses, and other program execution costs. Without these partners, it is hard to consider how our centers would otherwise function. Our ancillary services, whether through the Learning Labs, Community Gardens, or elsewhere on site are covered entirely by competitive grants and nominal non-federal funding from HACLA and are partnered with HACLA's nonprofit, Build Hope Inc.

REQUEST FOR CITY FUNDING

HACLA appreciates the support the City has offered, to date, in its support of SNL at a few of our large public housing sites and various commitments of CDBG and Proposition K and A over the years that have assisted with continued investments in these facilities of community health and well-being. HACLA requests consideration from the City in deepening our partnership in both operational and facility maintenance endeavors to preserve these critical spaces for our low-income residents and the surrounding neighborhoods. Thousands of residents both in and outside public housing utilize our facilities to meet all their basic social, educational, and resource-related needs. HACLA hopes over the long-term to make improvements to our facilities so they can also function as primary resiliency centers for our communities through the addition of solar roofs, battery backup systems, new Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) units, and other energy efficient amenities.

Additionally, we hope to build out a unique new regional-serving facility at Jordan Downs with both indoor and outdoor spaces that could function as a key location for the City’s Recreation and Parks Departments traditional programs and we are actively fundraising for its \$120 million construction. These can feel like lofty goals but really represent a meaningful investment in frontline communities. We look forward to the opportunity to share our short- and long-range plans for these community spaces with the City and work together to ensure they continue to be a meaningful resource. In the short-term, as we look to the Summer of 2024 and immediate needs, we would request the City to consider the following investments:

Location	Activity	Requested Funding Amount
Imperial Courts Gym	Roof upgrades at the gym to avoid continued rain leaks and water damage.	\$200,000
Jordan Downs Gym	Upgrade of deteriorated roof to avoid rain leaks and water damage.	\$200,000
Jordan Downs	Fund Summer Night Lights programming at the gym.	\$200,000