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NEWS RELEASE

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AFFORDABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY CELEBRATED AT TASSAFARONGA GRAND OPENING

Assistant HUD Secretary Sandra Henriquez, EPA Region IX Administrator Jared Blumenfeld join local leaders for ribbon cutting ceremony at revitalized East Oakland community during Affordable Housing Week event

OAKLAND, CA—The Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) celebrated Affordable Housing Week today by opening the doors to its first self-developed tax credit property, showcasing the continued growth of affordable housing and an expanded integration of sustainable features that intends to keep residents of Tassafaronga healthy while cutting down on energy use.

Tassafaronga is the latest in a string of OHA projects that has expanded the affordable housing stock in the city of Oakland. The Authority is increasing the number of affordable housing units from 3,308 to 3,977, including 81 home ownership opportunities.

“We are especially proud of this community because it is the first time we have developed a project of this magnitude,” OHA Executive Director Jon Gresley said. “The new Tassafaronga will be a sign of the continued revitalization of East Oakland, and OHA’s commitment to contribute to the revitalization of the entire public housing stock of Oakland. The combination of mixed income housing and a diverse range of services will provide the residents of this neighborhood even greater economic and social mobility.”

OHA welcomed U.S. Housing and Urban Development Assistant Secretary Sandra Henriquez, who participated in the grand opening.

“Under the leadership of Jon Gresley, Oakland Housing Authority continues to succeed with innovative solutions,” Henriquez said. “The redevelopment of Tassafaronga represents a commitment to building green, sustainable, affordable housing with enriched services and a community focus. East Oakland and OHA has shown us all how to work together to rebuild a place that people can proudly call home, within walking distance of education, health and recreational facilities.”

The Tassafaronga site plan is the first venture developed statewide by a housing authority or redevelopment agency expected to achieve a LEED for Homes Platinum Certification, and it is the first project in Northern California to have earned a Gold Certification in the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED for Neighborhood Development program.



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Tassafaronga was first developed in 1945 as housing for war workers. OHA obtained the site in 1955 and constructed an 87-unit public housing development in 1964. After four decades, the housing became distressed and obsolete. In 2005, the Authority began the process of planning for the rebuilding of Tassafaronga. It now boasts 137 mixed-income rental units and has turned a defunct pasta factory into an additional 20 supportive housing units for families, including those who have a family member affected by HIV/AIDS.

The new development boasts sustainable features such as a green roof, carpet made from recycled materials and a storm water filtration system that will create a healthier living environment and result in each of the buildings using 30 percent to 47 percent less energy than the standard California home.

“This community worked diligently to create a healthy neighborhood using innovative, energy-saving approaches to urban housing design,” said Jared Blumenfeld, Regional Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the Pacific Southwest. “Tassafaronga is literally the gold standard for urban cleanup and redevelopment projects.”

Located within close walking distance to Acorn Woodland Elementary School, the new East Oakland Community Library at 81st Avenue and the Tassafaronga Park and Recreation Center, Tassafaronga provides residents with community resources which will be augmented by staff from service providers such as Project Access and AIDS Project of the East Bay. Residents living with HIV/AIDS will have access to supportive services and an on-site primary care clinic. Everyone living at Tassafaronga Village can obtain career counseling and participate in educational classes at the property’s Family Resource Center.

“I love the atmosphere and layout here. It makes you want to be more upbeat and positive. You don’t want to do anything to bring this place down,” Tassafaronga resident Andrea President said. “I am overwhelmed and thrilled that I can call this place home. It gives me a sense of warmth. It makes me strive to do more so that one day I can own a place like this.”

The grand opening is part of East Bay Housing Organizations’ Affordable Housing Week, May 7 to May 16, designed to demonstrate that affordable housing provides the foundation for healthy families and sustainable communities.

Long recognized as one of the leading housing authorities in the nation, the Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) continues to be an innovator in the field of public housing. Currently, OHA provides housing for approximately 10 percent of Oakland’s families, operating 1,606 public housing units and 1,554 project based section 8 units. Presently, 11,142 of Oakland families, elderly and disabled rent with Section 8 vouchers. The average annual income of OHA families is about \$15,000.