



CITY OF INGLEWOOD

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Telephone: (310) 412-5300 Fax: (310) 330-5733

COMMENTS

Roosevelt F. Dorn
Mayor

**Mayor Roosevelt F. Dorn
City of Inglewood, California
before the
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity
April 12, 2006**

Mayor Roosevelt F. Dorn:

Good Morning! I would like to begin by thanking the Chairman and all of the distinguished members of this Subcommittee for conducting these hearings today. I want to especially thank Inglewood's Congressional representative, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, for her constant efforts on behalf of the City of Inglewood and the other communities that she so admirably represents.

The City of Inglewood has participated in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program since its inception. Our residents and businesses have benefited greatly from the crucial Federal funding provided through the CDBG program.

The CDBG program has provided more than \$25 million in assistance to low-income families, individuals and businesses. Indeed, the CDBG program has been vitally important to the City of Inglewood and to our ability to enhance safety, prosperity and increased livability within our community.

Inglewood utilizes CDBG funds to educate and protect low-income individuals with regards to housing discrimination. In an effort to ensure fairness and eliminate housing discrimination, over 10,000 low-income individuals have benefited from fair housing counseling. These monies have funded legal assistance to individuals who are victimized by unfair housing practices.

CDBG funds help us in our overall effort to maintain a suitable living environment in our community. Inglewood uses over \$1.3 million annually in CDBG funds to build and improve the public infrastructure system in CDBG eligible portions of the city.

These infrastructure improvement projects include: redesigning streets for increased traffic safety around local parks and schools; increasing pedestrian mobility for persons with physical and developmental disabilities through an aggressive program of installing pedestrian wheelchair ramps in over 350 locations throughout Inglewood; and increasing neighborhood safety through improved property maintenance and correction of building violation deficiencies. These efforts have resulted in achievement of an 80% correction rate of over 8,000 residential and commercial property maintenance/code enforcement violations. Additionally, CDBG funds are used to eradicate over 18,000 annual incidences of graffiti. This funding allows our city to enhance our community beautification efforts, which in turn encourages homeownership, community pride and investment in our city.

CDBG funds are used as a powerful community-based crime prevention tool. Our city has leveraged CDBG public service funds to assist several local non-profit organizations assist our police department to combat gang-related crime. This effort resulted in the development of vital gang-intervention programs that divert at-risk youth from becoming involved in gang activity. As a result of our community-based crime prevention efforts, gang activity in the City was reduced by 18% over the past three years. We need CDBG funds to continue our efforts in this regard.

CDBG helped spark an economic development boom in Inglewood. The City of Inglewood suffered from an increasing blighted downtown area after the relocation of major retailers from the City (Sears Department Store, J.C. Penney and Boston Stores). Inglewood leveraged \$1.2 million in CDBG Section 108 Loan Funds, with \$700,000 in Redevelopment Funding and \$500,000 in Department of Commerce Economic Development funds to rebuild the infrastructure in the downtown area, provided over \$250,000 in small business loans, and created 10 full-time jobs.

As a result of the economic development and beautification of the City's central business district, major retail and restaurant chains have decided to open stores in our city. These stores include Home Depot, Target, Bed Bath and Beyond, Chili's, Marshall's, Michael's, Ross Dress for Less, Staples Office Supplies, Bally's Total Fitness, Red Lobster and In-N-Out Restaurant. These new developments have resulted in hundreds of additional jobs being created in the

City. We fully anticipate that other prominent national chains will follow now that the city of Inglewood is viewed as an economically viable place to conduct business.

Inglewood, like most cities throughout the nation, depends on CDBG funds to provide services and improvements that are vital to maintaining the vitality of our community. The changes proposed within the President's fiscal year 2007 budget would adversely impact the residents of Inglewood and our businesses. In fact, our budgeted CDBG revenues for the current fiscal year represent a 23% decrease in funding from the previous year. Our overall budgeted revenues from the Department of Housing and Urban Development represent a 27% decrease from last year. The proposed "reform" of the CDBG program would undermine our ability to help low-income families at a time when they need our help most.

I want to take this opportunity to respectfully urge the members of this Committee to take steps to protect a crucial source of funding for communities across the nation. America is a generous nation that is constantly giving to others around the world. Now, I humbly ask that you do what's right and extend that same spirit of generosity to the citizens of America right here at home.

Again, thank you very much for extending me an opportunity to testify before you today.