

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 19, 2009

Contact Information: Gloria Chavez, (909) 483-2444, ext. 170

Citrus Grove of Rialto: One Year Later
A look at a massive neighborhood revitalization project a year after it grand opened; is the investment paying off?

RIALTO, Calif. – Last year on October 23, 2008, on a warm late afternoon, the grand opening of a massive development project in the city of Rialto named Citrus Grove of Rialto was being celebrated with great fanfare. Balloons were flying, children were having their faces painted, and numerous elected officials from the federal, state, and local level were all present to celebrate the complete transformation of a blighted, crime-ridden neighborhood into a completely renovated and renewed affordable housing community. During the official ceremony, elected officials and company spokespersons talked about the bright future for the community. It was described as the beginning of a neighborhood renaissance.

That was almost one year ago. Today, a look at the challenges and accomplishments of the past year indeed point to a better future, not only for the residents of Citrus Grove, but the outlying community as well.

“The work didn’t end with the ribbon cutting at Citrus Grove,” said project developer National Community Renaissance CEO Orlando Cabrera. “Although the acquisition of 160 run down condominiums was tough, and renovating units in such bad shape was challenging, the real work began after the physical work was complete. That was when we needed to build a community from the ashes left from decades of poverty, gangs, and crime.”

A look at the last year since the grand opening shows some very impressive developments. National CORE, working with its social service affiliate Hope Through Housing Foundation (Hope) received approximately \$700,000 in funding from the highly competitive 21st Century High School

After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens (ASSETs) program. The funding is being used to implement a highly specialized after-school program for teens in grades 9–12. Since Citrus Grove is located directly adjacent to Eisenhower High School, students at the high school benefit from the tutoring, computer lab, mentoring, and leadership and confidence building activities offered through the program. Hope won approximately \$1 million in grants to implement a nationally accredited violence prevention program called Peace Builders and has incorporated the curriculum into the high school program as well as K–8 after school program. This is an especially important investment since the renovated Citrus Grove lies in a neighborhood that is still surrounded by dilapidated apartments known for high crime and gang activity.

The property received impressive national awards this year including the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) Award of Excellence for Program Innovation and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Pillar of the Industry Award for Best Repositioning of a Multifamily Asset.

Citrus Grove was a redevelopment project undertaken by the City of Rialto with National Community Renaissance (National CORE). The City partnered with National CORE to redevelop the aging neighborhood of 40 four-plexes of deteriorating condominiums into 152 newly-refurbished affordable housing apartments to create a safe and healthy living environment for the residents and the city. In the past, the notoriously dangerous neighborhood then known as “Willows-Winchester” had generated the highest number of Rialto’s police service calls each year, costing taxpayers more than \$160,000 annually. Built in the late 1960’s as low-cost condominiums for first-time homebuyers, the neighborhood had deteriorated into a dangerous area plagued by health and safety violations, gang-related violence and poor property management. Virtually all of the units had become rentals with individual absentee landlords.

“When we redeveloped Citrus Grove we tackled the core of a very troubled neighborhood,” said City of Rialto Housing Programs Manager John Dutrey. “However, our work is not finished. There are still outlying areas that continue to be a problem for the City and impede our progress at Citrus Grove. We are in the predevelopment stages of building on the success of Citrus Grove and acquiring and renovating outlying areas in need.”

Citrus Grove Phase II is slated to begin construction in November this year. The development includes completely renovating another 42 units directly adjacent to Citrus Grove and incorporates them into the property. Like Phase I, this required ongoing property negotiations and securing the financial resources to make the development feasible. The scope of work is similar to Phase I since these units are also in severe disrepair. Construction will take approximately one year to complete.

“National CORE’s zero-tolerance crime policies, strict quality control, and ongoing on-site family services have consistently led to substantial improvement to the neighborhood,” said Dutrey. “We look forward to continued success and a partnership with National CORE.”

###

About National CORE/Hope: National CORE is a nonprofit development organization dedicated to building and managing quality affordable apartment homes. In a step to fulfill the intent of providing families and seniors more than housing opportunities, in 1998 Hope Through Housing Foundation (Hope) was established as a partner organization to National CORE. Hope provides services to help families with children succeed. In addition, it makes available support to low income seniors to maintain their health and independence.