

## Getting To Know The “Other Side Of Los Angeles”

(NAPS)—Poppy DeMarco Dennis expected to see rubble-strewn streets and run-down buildings. And like anyone who has gone through South Central Los Angeles lately, she found something dramatically different from what she expected. “I see an inner city neighborhood transformed,” Dennis says. “I’m amazed.”

A San Diego delegate to the Democratic National Convention, Dennis was one of several dozen Mayors, Congresspersons, elected officials, and delegates touring the area, seeing firsthand inspiring examples of how public/private partnerships can make a difference in a community.

Their first stop, El Mercado La Paloma—a former warehouse being converted into a multi-vendor marketplace. “What you see here is private enterprise and public funding helping communities survive,” says Congressman and tour organizer Xavier Becerra. “Invest a little money and real people benefit.”

Sponsored by the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco (the Bank) and the Local Initiative Support Conference (LISC), the tour showcased what is possible when public and private resources and dollars come together around economic development. The FHLBSF is a wholesale lending source for community lenders in California, Arizona, and Nevada and a facilitator of public/private partnerships in housing and community development. LISC is a non-profit corporation and facilitator of public/private partnerships providing low interest loans, grants and technical assistance for economic development initiatives that enable the non-profit grassroots work of neighborhood organizations called community development corporations (CDCs) to energize their communities.

“We are the link between Wall Street and Main Street,” says Lawrence Parks, Senior Vice President for Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco. “Our insti-



**Larry Parks of the FHLBSF speaks to convention delegates and elected officials about community revitalization.**

tution has been America’s consistent source of housing and economic development financing in good economic times and bad.”

FHLBSF’s investment is helping make Jacqueline Salas’s American dream come true. Once completed, the Mercado will house her family’s new bakery along with dozens more shops and boutiques. “I never thought it would be possible,” says Salas. “If not for LISC and the Bank, we would still be working for someone else instead of someday owning our own business.” Senator Paul S. Sarbanes, ranking Democrat on the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, remarked, “You have included (inner city residents) into the mainstream. They feel like they have a piece of the action and they take more responsibility for where they live.”

Other revitalized sites on the tour included the Pueblo Nuevo Charter School—an abandoned commercial building converted into an elementary charter school—and The Historic Dunbar Hotel containing 73 single resident occupancy (SRO) units, commercial space and room for a museum.

The tour left a lasting impression on Poppy DeMarco Dennis. “I’m starting to realize investing in communities like South Central works,” says Dennis. “Once the convention is over, I intend to bring back ideas to help revitalize areas in San Diego.”