



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Allentown Housing Authority Rededication Ceremony Marks
Completion Of Cumberland Gardens Reconstruction**

*Comprehensive Renovations Modernizes Homes, Improves Accessibility And
Community Safety*

Allentown, Pa. -- Almost 45 years after it first welcomed residents to Cumberland Gardens, the Allentown Housing Authority today rededicated the city's largest family-oriented public housing community to celebrate the completion of the award-winning comprehensive renovation of all 200 apartments.

Invited to the Oct. 12 celebration were federal, state and local officials, including U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent; representatives from the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development; Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency; Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski, state Sen. Pat Browne; state Rep. Peter Schweyer, City Council members, the AHA Board of Commissioners and community residents.

"The overall goal was to modernize Cumberland Gardens," said AHA Executive Director Daniel R. Farrell. "This community was built in the 1970s. It's now more than 40 years old and we wanted to make it viable for another 40 years."

The \$45 million project included the complete rehabilitation of the properties both inside and out, improved accessibility for residents and substantial changes to outdoor common indoor and outdoor areas to increase green space and make the community closer and more pedestrian-friendly.

The first phase was funded in part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, AHA and City of Allentown funds. The second and third phases were financed through a combination of Low Income Housing Tax Credits from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, City of Allentown and AHA funds.

Construction and general contracting was provided by Harkins Builders and Pennrose Properties Inc. of Philadelphia, which partnered with the housing authority on the successful reconstruction of Overlook Park in east Allentown. Fulton Financial of Lancaster provided tax credit equity funding critical to the project.

The makeover represents the largest single project undertaken by the Allentown Housing Authority since the construction of Overlook Park on the site of the former Hanover Acres/Riverview Terrace in East Allentown, and the project has won praise from federal, state and city officials. In 2013 it received an Award of Merit from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.

“This is a great day for the residents of Cumberland Gardens and for the Allentown Housing Authority (AHA),” said Rep. Dent. “The AHA’s efforts here are a textbook example of how to accomplish an outstanding revitalization and renewal process for public housing. This project stands as a point of pride for the City of Allentown.”

Mayor Pawlowski also praised the project.

“The improvements to Cumberland Gardens ensure that Allentown continues to provide affordable housing in an environment that inspires residents to achieve a better life,” said Pawlowski. “In addition to these renovations, the housing authority is an ally in making our neighborhoods safe by partnering with the city on surveillance cameras and providing additional police patrols to reduce crime.”

The overhaul began in 2010. In October 2012 AHA celebrated the completion of the first phase of the project, which involved 74 units.

Unlike the makeover of Hanover Acres and Riverview Terrace into the new Overlook Park, the Cumberland Gardens project did not involve demolition of all existing apartments. Instead, all of the units were rebuilt both inside and out to modernize the apartments and adapt them to 21st Century lifestyles and provide improved accessibility for residents.

The three-phase project reduced the number of bedrooms in many of the apartments to provide adequate size quarters for modern living needs. In addition, each unit received new doors and windows, structural improvements, replacement of floors, trim, fixtures and siding and interior wall repairs. The project also included substantial landscape changes aimed at increasing the green or grassy areas and making the community more pedestrian-friendly.

The refurbishments have been a hit with both residents and neighbors. Resident Elizabeth Martinez said the comfortable new home has helped her family.

“I love to be inside my house and my kids love to be inside the house,” Martinez said last fall. “They always liked to be at home, but now they like it even more.”

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The mission of the Allentown Housing Authority is to develop and manage quality affordable housing for low income households, provide fair housing opportunities, and positively impact the quality of life for residents in our community. We have been providing, safe, decent and affordable housing for low-income families, senior citizens and disabled residents of the Allentown region since 1937. To learn more about the Allentown Housing Authority, its programs and its properties, please go to <http://allentownhousing.org/>