

\$6.42 MILLION STIMULUS-FUNDED RENOVATION PROJECT KICKS OFF FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED COMMUNITY

SAN ANTONIO –The San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) officially “kicked off” \$6.42 million in renovations today at Lewis Chatham Apartments, an elderly and disabled community on the City’s southeast side. The much-needed capital improvements and repairs are made possible through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) funds.

Built in 1973, Lewis Chatham Apartments will undergo comprehensive modernization including improved energy efficient heating and air conditioning, lighting, security and fire systems, as well as upgraded elevators and new plumbing.

SAHA’s Board of Commissioners and City Councilwoman Jennifer Ramos and others were on hand to celebrate beginning renovation at Lewis Chatham Apartments.

“This project is one of the many renovation and improvement projects that will be occurring at SAHA communities over the next several years,” said SAHA Board Chair Ramiro Cavazos. “Thanks to Recovery Act funds, nearly \$20 million in capital improvements will further our efforts to improve the quality of life for our residents.”

Residents living at Lewis Chatham Apartments were relocated to other public housing or rental properties in late 2009. The 119 relocated residents will be given the option to return in early 2011 when renovations are completed.

One resident, Robert Alvarez, 70, plans on returning when the work is completed. “I had a very nice apartment at Lewis Chatham but I’m excited about the changes. I’m looking forward to it being even nicer when it’s finished,” said Alvarez.

“We’re committed to preserving public housing units that serve individuals and families earning less than 30 percent of the area median income and creating a safer and healthier environment,” said SAHA President and CEO Lourdes Castro Ramirez. “We receive approximately \$9 million in capital funding each year – far less than what is needed to adequately address improvement needs at SAHA’s 6,177 aging public housing stock. The Recovery Act funds are allowing us to make improvements that we may not have otherwise been able to accomplish.”

Councilwoman Jennifer Ramos applauded SAHA for proactively pursuing Recovery Act funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

A number of firms have been procured for the work at Lewis Chatham Apartments through competitive bidding processes. The architect for the renovation is San Antonio-based O’Neill Conrad Oppelt Architects (OCO Architects), and the builder is San Antonio-based Galaxy Builders, Ltd., a minority business enterprise that has committed to soliciting and attempting to hire Section 3-qualified, low-income individuals.

Recovery Act funding can only be used for capital improvements. The money must be obligated to projects within one year with 60 percent expended within two years and 100 percent expended within three years. At this time, SAHA's Board of Commissioners has approved contracts to obligate 99 percent of the funds.

To read more about the specifics of SAHA's Recovery Act activities, visit www.saha.org/aboutsaha/html/stimulus.html.