

SKY @ Jordan Downs helps Watts residents improve and stabilize their housing



BACKGROUND

This case study illustrates how TCC-funded affordable housing has enabled Watts residents to move into more comfortable, upgraded homes while paying similar rent and staying in the neighborhood they love. The story features Lorena Gutierrez and Anita Rodriguez, two residents who moved from older affordable housing into SKY @ Jordan Downs, a new building built using TCC dollars. To learn more about Watts Rising's affordable housing investments and displacement avoidance plan, see [page XX](#).

Interviews for this story were conducted in May 2024 and September 2024.

SKY @ Jordan Downs, a new affordable housing building built with TCC funding. Photo credit: UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

LORENA GUTIERREZ was excited that her move to SKY @ Jordan Downs was only a short distance from her prior home. After 17 years of living in Watts, Gutierrez enjoys a strong social network in the neighborhood. "I like living in Watts because of the existing relationships I have built here," she said. "The community is great." When she heard about the new TCC-funded housing units at SKY, Gutierrez knew her family would enjoy a brand new building in a neighborhood they already liked, surrounded by amenities.

"I was excited to move to SKY at Jordan Downs because they are brand new buildings. They are located in a nice neighborhood and centrally close to various amenities. I feel more comfortable living at SKY at Jordan Downs — I feel more relaxed here."

LORENA GUTIERREZ

Gutierrez and her three adult children moved into the building in November 2023. If she had not gotten this new apartment in the neighborhood where she already had roots, Gutierrez said she likely would have moved to another neighborhood. Beyond the ability to stay in her neighborhood, Gutierrez gained several benefits by moving into SKY. Her apartment — a 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom unit — is larger, newer, and more relaxing than her prior home in a nearby public housing unit.

While the new building is in the same neighborhood, Gutierrez noted improvements in the location, including less violence and more walkability. With more cost-effective grocery stores nearby, Gutierrez says she has saved money living at SKY. Gutierrez does not own a car — she takes public transportation most places she goes, and while she hopes for additional bus stops near her building, she can take the bus to shop for groceries.



Lorena Gutierrez. Photo credit: UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

Gutierrez doesn't only live at the new building — she works as a community liaison for the residents of her building within the larger Jordan Downs community. SKY is one of the newest of many buildings at Jordan Downs, and each is represented by liaisons like Gutierrez. She started the position about six months before moving into her new apartment, and she works to represent her neighbors' concerns and wishes on topics like crime, safety, and community events.

Even though Gutierrez is pleased with her apartment at SKY, she hopes to eventually own her own place. Gutierrez credits the money she's saving at SKY as helpful in advancing toward that goal.

“I would like to become a homeowner; I feel by saving money here it can help my children and I achieve this goal. In comparison to other neighborhoods, it is more cost effective to live here.”

LORENA GUTIERREZ

ANITA RODRIGUEZ has also lived in Watts for 17 years and enjoys the community the neighborhood provides. Her children have all moved out, and she just moved into a 1-bedroom apartment at SKY. As someone who enjoys having her personal space, the unit at SKY has provided her ample room to spread out — even having switched from two bedrooms in her prior apartment to one. “I like my large room and living room. For myself only, it's more comfortable having one bedroom. It's a large unit,” she noted.

Rodriguez has a strong community in Watts — but she would likely have moved away to live with one of her children if not for the apartment at SKY. In her new apartment, Rodriguez has been able to maintain much of the same social life she had in her prior home. In fact, some of her friends moved into apartments at SKY at the same time Rodriguez did, maintaining her community.

“I wanted to stay living in Watts rather than moving. I have everything nearby — and I don't feel lonely here. I have made friends and connections throughout the years, and I stay connected with the same people.”

ANITA RODRIGUEZ

Living at SKY provides several quality of life upgrades for Rodriguez. In particular, the location is more comfortable for her as a public transit user — with no car, she takes the bus everywhere, from grocery shopping to doctor appointments. She has noticed that the surroundings are cleaner than her old street, she feels safe walking near the building, and she can access all of the essentials by bus within a reasonable distance.

SKY provides residents with another change as well: the building has all-electric appliances. This climate- and health-friendly measure steps toward reducing use of methane gas in homes, which is unhealthy for residents due to the fumes they release. At first, Rodriguez saw this as a cost: she initially saw high electric bills as a result. But the electricity cost was offset by having no gas bills, and she soon noticed her overall energy bill had decreased from over \$100 to closer to \$30 per month. She attributes the drop to living alone.

“I like living at SKY because the buses leave me right in front of my unit ... The walk from the bus stop to my unit is close. This is important as I use a walker with wheels.”

ANITA RODRIGUEZ



Anita Gonzalez. Photo credit: UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation