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POINT OF VIEW

Partnerships key to community survival

By **Steve PonTell**

We live in a vastly changed world, where creative and innovative public-private partnerships may very well determine whether a community survives or heads down the path to insolvency.

At every turn, we see troubling evidence of this. Cities filing bankruptcy. Basic municipal services reduced or eliminated. Agencies, on their own, unable to serve those most in need.

And while this is a national problem, certainly in California it has been exacerbated by the elimination of redevelopment financing — a final straw for many communities already on the brink of financial collapse.

The solution — the only real solution — is a collaborative one, in which leaders and stakeholders from all disciplines unite around a common goal and a shared vision. Ours are not challenges that government or business or the nonprofit world can fix on their own. They must work together.

This month, the groundwork will be laid for these kinds of partnerships when experts from the fields of affordable housing, economic and community development, education, health care and social services gather in Pomona for National Community Renaissance's first annual national

symposium, "Building the Future of Community."

Our goal is simple: To create synergy and tear down the silos that keep communities from moving forward.

It's also a next step for our Rancho Cucamonga-based organization as a catalyst for community revitalization. For 20 years, National Community Renaissance ("National CORE") has built our reputation around quality affordable housing, serving more than 250,000 residents during that time. We currently have 80 developments serving more than 8,800 residents, making us the nation's third largest nonprofit developer of low-income housing.

In addition, through our Hope through Housing subsidiary, we've provided more than 2 million hours in supportive services to enhance quality of life for our residents, including preschool, after-school and senior wellness programs.

Here in the Inland Empire, tangible results of these efforts are on vivid display in communities such as Montclair and Rialto. In 2010, our Villaggio on Route 66 development in Rancho Cucamonga was named Best Affordable Housing Community by the National Association of Home Builders.

All of which is a sturdy foundation upon which to build and to confront the growing challenges communities

face. At our Oct. 26 symposium and accompanying 20th anniversary gala — both at the Sheraton Event Center — we'll have a chance to put the progress we've made up until now into the proper context as building blocks for a future that, in California anyway, won't have redevelopment dollars paving the way.

The pressure is on all of us as community stakeholders to understand and appreciate how interconnected we are. Quality affordable housing is an asset to the education community, by providing a safe haven for students and their families. Quality education is an asset for the business community, by providing a trained or trainable workforce. Profitable, engaged businesses are an asset to the community as a whole, by providing jobs and the revenues to pay for police and fire protection, infrastructure improvements and other public services than enhance our quality of life.

National CORE is committed to working with all of our partners to see to it that whatever challenges this vastly changed world presents, neighborhoods and communities don't suffer. This is the time for leadership to emerge from within, and as catalysts for community revitalization, we're proud to help lead the charge.

Steve PonTell is the chief executive officer of National Community Renaissance in Rancho Cucamonga.