

First KA receives CRA emergency grant

By Dexter H. Kim
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Landmark coffee shop operator Henny Bak has become the first riot victim in downtown Los Angeles to receive an emergency grant from the city's Community Redevelopment Agency.

He and his wife, Hung Soon Bak, who owns Phil's Coffee Shop at 100 S. Spring St., recently collected \$19,000 from the CRA.

Until the recent riots, the coffee shop had been serving traditional diner fare to downtown employees, shoppers and tourists for more than 30 years.

Phil's Coffee Shop's location near City Hall, the county courthouse and the Los Angeles Times made it a favorite with the downtown lunch crowd, according to Bak, who has managed the restaurant for his wife since 1990.

"Around here, this is the only coffee shop," said Bak. "We never competition, next door [there is] a hamburger store that is to go; others are fast food. Only at



Henny Bak, right, manager of Phil's Coffee Shop, receives a \$19,000 check from **Bill Jones**, CRA rehabilitation director.

coffee shop [customers] can sit here and order traditional-style."

On Wednesday, April 29, the first of the four-day riots, the diner sustained an estimated \$50,000 worth of damages and losses from looting, vandalism and fire.

When the Baks heard about the emergency grants the CRA has made available to small businesses damaged during the riots, they immediately applied

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for a \$19,000 grant to cover the business' losses due to fire and vandalism.

The city council had recently approved \$9.5 million in emergency grants for the CRA to rebuild residences and small businesses in its 17 redevelopment project areas.

CRA redevelopment project areas include: the central business district in downtown, Hollywood, Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Watts, Pico Union, Hoover, Adams Normandie and Crenshaw districts.

Bak also applied for a loan with his bank to compensate for the rest of his losses. A month and a half later, he said, he has yet to hear from them.

About a week after receiving the CRA grant, the coffee shop was re-opened to "pretty slow" business, according to Bak. The slump was to be expected, he said, because of the time of year.

"Usually summertime, the coffee shop, things are a little bit down," said Bak. "Everybody goes summer vacation, it's too hot, [business in the summer] depends on tour people."

Despite the sluggish business, Bak maintained that many regular customers have been enthusiastic about the coffee shop's re-opening.

"They saw it on the TV when coffee shop burned down," said Bak. "They called to my home. They say, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry,' and when we open again, they came [to say], 'Oh-h, nice meet you again!'"