



SAN DIEGO  
HOUSING  
COMMISSION

**News Release**

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## **SAN DIEGO HOUSING COMMISSION ANNOUNCES INITIATIVE TO EXPAND FREE TAX PREPARATION AND RAISE AWARENESS OF TAX CREDITS FOR LOW-INCOME SAN DIEGANS**

*Free Tax Prep San Diego, with support from Citi Community Development, is a collaboration among SDHC, the City-County Reinvestment Task Force and San Diego Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition*

**SAN DIEGO, CA** — Free Tax Prep San Diego, an expanded collaborative initiative to help low-income families prepare and file their taxes for free and potentially add up to thousands of dollars to their refund, was announced today by the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), its partners, and elected officials who are supporting the effort.

Free Tax Prep San Diego is a collaboration among SDHC, the San Diego City-County Reinvestment Task Force, the San Diego Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Coalition, and the founding corporate partner Citi Community Development, which aims to raise awareness and utilization of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites and Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) for eligible workers.

“Tax season can be confusing and many San Diegans are unaware of the resources available to them, which is why VITA sites across the county are so important for families who might not be able to hire someone for this kind of help. This grant will help the San Diego Housing Commission share information on VITA sites with households who use their other support services. Increasing awareness of these free services through community partnerships is going to make it easier for San Diegans to get connected to the help they need and save money,” U.S. Representative Scott Peters said.

Free Tax Prep San Diego includes outreach specifically to more than 15,000 SDHC Federal rental assistance participants and tenants of SDHC-owned affordable rental housing; supports three tax preparation “super sites” based at local malls; hosts tax preparation education workshops; and offers Virtual VITA services through the Virtual Counselor Network (VCN). The initiative also screens filers for other public benefits, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The initiative began on January 29, 2018, and runs through the Federal tax filing deadline of April 17, 2018. The San Diego EITC Coalition is led by the United Way of San Diego County.

The Federal EITC is a refundable credit for low- to moderate-income working individuals and couples, particularly those with children. California’s State EITC was created in 2015 to supplement the Federal EITC as additional assistance to working families. To claim the tax credits, families are required to file a tax return. However, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) estimates that nearly 20 percent of households eligible to receive the Federal EITC do not claim it. In San Diego County, approximately \$137 million in Federal and State EITC is unclaimed, which could assist more than 60,000 families.

“Each year, too many hard-working San Diegans are missing out on hundreds or even thousands of dollars in tax refunds that they have earned. This is money that could be used to make repairs on the family car or buy the kids new shoes or warm winter jackets. We must continue to get the word out to our residents that this money is available. I am grateful to Citi Community Development and the San Diego Housing Commission for spreading the news about both the

Federal and State Earned Income Tax Credit programs,” said California State Senator Toni Atkins, who advocated for the creation of the State EITC when she served as Speaker of the California State Assembly.

For the 2017 tax year, low-income families who apply for the tax credits can get back nearly \$9,000 if they qualify for the maximum amounts of Federal and State EITC. Families may qualify for the State EITC if their annual income is less than \$22,300 and for the Federal EITC if their income is less than \$54,000.

“More and more San Diegans are eligible to benefit from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which has the potential to put thousands of dollars back in the pockets of working families,” said California State Assemblymember Todd Gloria. “If you make less than \$54,000 as a family of four, this is for you. By expanding our partnership with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program, we are providing opportunities to improve the quality-of-life for low-income San Diego families.”

The County of San Diego is the largest funder of free tax preparation services in the San Diego region.

“We want people to claim their Earned Income Tax Credit and to keep more of their hard-earned money and spend that money here in San Diego to support our local economy,” County Supervisor Greg Cox said.

The San Diego City-County Reinvestment Task Force, which develops strategies for reinvestment in low- and moderate-income communities, is also helping to raise awareness of the Federal and State EITC with Free Tax Prep San Diego, which is supported by \$250,000 from Citi Community Development.

“San Diego working families have increased access to more of their hard earned wages due to this generous support from Citi Community Development. I am proud of the Reinvestment Task Force’s efforts to secure this grant to expand Earned Income Tax Credit Campaign and Free Tax Prep San Diego program. The EITC is an important investment in our San Diego economy and increased access helps our entire region,” said San Diego City Council President Pro Tem Barbara Bry, who co-chairs the task force with San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts.

“As co-chair of the City-County Reinvestment Task Force, I’m very grateful to Citi Community Development and the San Diego Housing Commission for their partnership in further elevating our region’s successful EITC outreach programs. By boosting awareness of EITC eligibility and providing services like free tax preparation, the investments being made today can help us get the nearly \$137 million in credits that go unclaimed each year back into the hands of working San Diegans and into our regional economy,” Supervisor Roberts said.

Free Tax Prep San Diego also provides free tax preparation services by appointment at sites such as the SDHC partnership development San Diego Square Senior Apartments in downtown San Diego.

“Making sure that low-income families are aware of and receive these tax credits, which can make a big difference in their lives, supports an important part of the San Diego Housing

Commission’s mission—to provide opportunities to improve the quality of life for the families that we serve,” SDHC Chairman of the Board Frank Urtasun said.

Free Tax Prep San Diego also aligns with founding corporate partner Citi Community Development’s efforts to improve financial access and resiliency for more individuals and families.

“More than 300,000 San Diego residents are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, a cash infusion that can help lower income families pay down debt or start saving for the future. Yet, one in five eligible filers do not take advantage of the credit,” said Bob Annibale, Global Director of Citi Community Development and Inclusive Finance. “Free Tax Prep San Diego aims to connect thousands of residents to the Earned Income Tax Credit, which can enable them to become more financially resilient.”

In addition, financial education workshops are offered at the SDHC Achievement Academy, a learning and resource center and computer lab that provides programs that emphasize personal financial education, career planning and job skills for SDHC rental assistance recipients and public housing residents.

To make an appointment for free tax preparation services, eligible families should call 2-1-1 or visit [www.myfreetaxes.org](http://www.myfreetaxes.org)

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