



SAN DIEGO
HOUSING
COMMISSION

News Release

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ICONIC ROOFTOP SIGN REINSTALLED, A RENOVATION MILESTONE FOR 102-YEAR-OLD HOTEL CHURCHILL

Restored 1940s era sign hoisted back to the top of historical Downtown hotel, on track to open as affordable rental housing for homeless Veterans this summer

San Diego, CA — A meticulously, manually restored 1940s era sign is back atop the historical Hotel Churchill in Downtown San Diego, returning to the skyline that it has been a part of for nearly seven decades.

“The raising of the Hotel Churchill’s iconic sign back to its rightful place today marks a significant milestone for the renovation of the 102-year-old Hotel Churchill, ahead of its summer grand reopening as affordable rental housing for homeless Veterans,” said Richard C. Gentry, President & Chief Executive Officer of the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC).

SDHC, working with its nonprofit affiliate, Housing Development Partners (HDP), is rehabilitating the historical Hotel Churchill to create 72 permanent affordable housing studios with supportive services for homeless individuals, including 56 Veterans. The studios will remain affordable for 65 years.

At 8:30 a.m., a 5-person crew used a crane to begin to hoist the six panels that form the 32-foot-wide and 10-foot-tall sign one at a time. By 11:30 a.m., the sign, with hand-painted letters that are nearly 4 feet tall each, was back up on the rooftop of the seven-story Hotel Churchill. The almost 2,000 pound sign had been removed from the rooftop on June 30, 2015, for restoration.

The sign was carefully restored to its original condition, handiwork that took about 180 hours to complete by San Diego Electric Sign, a subcontractor working with Allgire General Contractors, the general contractor of the rehabilitation of Hotel Churchill.

The sign, made of galvanized, corrugated iron, had many rusted areas, as well as rat and bird nests. Most of the neon that illuminated the 28 letters of the double-sided sign was broken. Surprisingly, a “T,” an “R,” and a “C” still worked, and were incorporated into the renovation. An additional unexpected surprise was that the neon in those existing letters glowed clear blue – not red as was suspected based on the outward appearance.

To ensure that the iconic sign stayed true to its history, all work was done by hand. This included treating and patching the rusted areas; removing lead paint on the original sign; and repainting the red background, the 4-foot-tall white letters and their black shading.

The iconic sign is scheduled to be lit this summer at the grand reopening of the Hotel Churchill.

More than 95 percent of the sign's original material was saved. One part of the sign, however, has been upgraded.

An internal mounting structure was created to ensure the sign will be secure for decades to come in its new iron stand on the rooftop of the historic hotel.

Background -- Rehabilitation of Hotel Churchill:

The \$20.5 million renovation of Hotel Churchill is one of the original five components of [HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO](#), SDHC's three-year homelessness action plan (2017-14), which was launched on November 12, 2014.

SDHC has committed 72 Federal Sponsor-Based Housing Vouchers to provide rental assistance to Hotel Churchill, with an annual value of \$813,888, based on the monthly cost of the housing voucher, \$942.

Sponsor-Based Housing Vouchers are awarded to nonprofit organizations, or "sponsors," that provide supportive services for homeless San Diegans.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will provide supportive services for 56 housing units for homeless Veterans. In addition, \$1.8 million from the State Mental Health Services Act administered by the County of San Diego Mental Health Department, will provide permanent supportive services for the 16 non-Veterans adults – 8 units for youth aging out of foster care and 8 units for adults exiting the corrections system who also need supportive services.

Furthermore, the partnership between SDHC and HDP kept more than \$12.1 million of Federal funds in the City of San Diego to preserve affordable housing, which includes "Moving to Work" (MTW) funds and HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to the City of San Diego and administered by SDHC.

SDHC is one of only 39 public housing authorities in the nation, out of 3,400, to receive an MTW designation from HUD. MTW status gives SDHC more flexibility in how it invests these Federal funds to address the City of San Diego's unique housing needs.

More than \$9.2 million of these funds come from the federal MTW program, and \$2.9 million come from HOME funds.

An additional \$2.3 million has been committed to the rehabilitation of Hotel Churchill from the City of San Diego's Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) In-Lieu fees, Housing Trust Fund, and Inclusionary Housing Fund, which SDHC administers.

Civic San Diego also provided a \$3 million loan toward the rehabilitation of Hotel Churchill.

SDHC acquired Hotel Churchill on August 16, 2011, through a court settlement in a foreclosure proceeding. Hotel Churchill has been vacant since 2005.

There is a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) restriction recorded against Hotel Churchill, which requires that at least 57 units be maintained as SRO units for a term of at least 30 years from the completion of rehabilitation. The restriction requires the units to be affordable to households earning up to 50 percent of the San Diego Area Median Income (AMI), which is currently \$28,350 a year for one person.

All 72 housing units at Hotel Churchill will remain affordable for 55 years for San Diegans with incomes up to 60 percent of AMI, currently \$34,020 a year for one person, and for an additional 10 years for San Diegans with incomes up to 80 percent of AMI, currently \$45,400 a year.

For more information about SDHC, please visit www.sdhc.org

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