



SAN DIEGO  
HOUSING  
COMMISSION

**News Release**  
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**Media Contact: Maria Velasquez,  
Vice President Community Relations & Communications  
619-578-7560 [mariav@sdhc.org](mailto:mariav@sdhc.org)**

## **ONE-STOP HOUSING AND SERVICE CENTER FOR HOMELESS SAN DIEGANS BECOMES REALITY WITH GRAND OPENING OF CONNECTIONS HOUSING DOWNTOWN**

**SAN DIEGO, CA**—A unique approach to helping 223 homeless men and women escape homelessness has become a reality in downtown San Diego with the grand opening today of the city-sponsored [Connections Housing Downtown](#), a year-round one-stop homeless housing and service center.

Connections Housing Downtown is a vital piece of the City of San Diego's long-term strategy to ultimately end homelessness downtown and citywide. The result of collaboration among many organizations, including the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), Connections Housing Downtown combines 150 interim housing beds and 73 permanent studios with convenient access to multiple supportive services and a community health clinic under one roof.

“Working with the council and the council president and all the partners here, we are going to make sure that we meet the challenge—that we solve the problem of homelessness in a major city,” Mayor Bob Filner said.

SDHC contributed a \$2 million loan toward the \$38 million cost of renovating the 12-story former site of the historic San Diego Athletic Club at 1250 Sixth Ave. to create Connections Housing Downtown. Affirmed Housing Group and PATH (People Assisting the Homeless) were co-developers of the project.

SDHC has provided 89 federal housing vouchers to support the residential studios and 16 special needs emergency units. In addition, 50 federal housing vouchers will help formerly homeless individuals who have stabilized their lives and are ready to transition out of Connections Housing Downtown find housing in the community while they continue to receive supportive services from PATH.

“Connections Housing Downtown represents the creativity, innovation and teamwork needed to effectively resolve the issue of homelessness in San Diego,” said Richard C. Gentry, SDHC's President and CEO. “The San Diego Housing Commission is one of the first housing agencies in the nation to use federal housing vouchers to make housing available for homeless individuals.”

Connections Housing Downtown provides new lives to many San Diegans, City Council President Todd Gloria said.

“This is a game-changer in the way we handle homelessness in this community,” Gloria said. “I personally believe San Diegans care about our homeless population 52 weeks a year, and that’s what this building says.”

One of the new residents of Connections Housing is a formerly homeless U.S. Army veteran, [Myron Wiltz](#), 59, who moved into the permanent housing program on Feb. 25 with the help of a housing voucher provided by SDHC and funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“With the housing commission being able to lend a helping hand and make sure that things go properly for me and safely for me, I want to thank them because without their help, I would never have made it,” said Wiltz, who had been living on the streets for the past 11 years and recently graduated from trucking school.

[SDHC](#) has been a key leader in the process that brought Connections Housing Downtown to fruition. On Dec. 2, 2008, the San Diego City Council requested that SDHC collaborate with the former Centre City Development Corporation (now Civic San Diego) to issue the request for proposals for a permanent homeless services facility.

A nine-member volunteer citizens committee to review the proposals was organized on April 3, 2009 by SDHC and Centre City Development Corporation. The volunteer citizens committee members represented:

- SDHC
- CCDC
- United Way
- City of San Diego
- County of San Diego
- Downtown San Diego Partnership
- East Village Community Action Network
- Downtown Residents Group
- Corporation for Supportive Housing

The volunteer citizens committee recommended the development team of Affirmed Housing Group and PATH, and the San Diego City Council approved that recommendation on Oct. 5, 2010.

“We gained consensus that this location and our concept met with the approval of most of the business leaders and ultimately a unanimous vote at the City Council,” said Jim Silverwood, President and CEO of Affirmed Housing Group. “A development such as this with over 120,000 square feet of floor space, an adaptive reuse of an historic building, which was originally completed in 1928, has more than its share of challenges. ... However, when one also considers the hidden gems—and I use that term loosely—contained within a structure that is 85 years old, you can understand this is a challenge worthy of any development team.”

PATH operates the facility, which also includes a Family Health Centers of San Diego clinic, a

food service program, and The PATH Depot Multiservice Center. The multiservice center features 34 service providers who offer assistance with job counseling, legal aid, veterans services and more.

“Homelessness is not just a downtown problem,” said City Councilman Kevin Faulconer. “We can make this a success here, and we will take it to neighborhoods all across the city of San Diego.”

Speakers at today’s grand opening, which more than 600 people attended, also included:

- Joel John Roberts, CEO, PATH
- John Molloy, Executive Director, PATH Ventures
- Ben Avey, Government and Media Relations, Family Health Centers of San Diego
- Assembly Majority Leader Toni Atkins, 78<sup>th</sup> District, California State Assembly
- Chairman Greg Cox, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
- Supervisor Ron Roberts, 4<sup>th</sup> District, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
- William J. Pavao, Executive Director, California Tax Credit Allocation Committee
- Jeff Graham, President, Civic San Diego
- Tony Lonigro, CEO, UnitedHealthcare Military & Veterans Southwest Region
- Kyle Hansen, Executive Vice President/Commercial Real Estate Division, U.S. Bank
- Jennifer LeSar, President, LeSar Development Consultants
- Kris Michell, President and CEO, Downtown San Diego Partnership

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