



SAN DIEGO
HOUSING
COMMISSION

News Release

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THE 1,000 HOMELESS VETERANS INITIATIVE—A PATH OFF THE STREETS WITHIN A YEAR FOR VETERANS

Housing Our Heroes landlord-outreach campaign is part of new initiative of HOUSING FIRST-SAN DIEGO, SDHC's landmark three-year Homelessness Action Plan

San Diego, CA—A 26-year Navy Veteran who rents apartments to formerly homeless Veterans urged his fellow landlords in the city of San Diego to “do the patriotic thing” through similar rentals, as part of [The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative](#), a collaborative effort of the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) and the City of San Diego, which will provide housing opportunities for up to a thousand homeless military Veterans in the city over the next year.

Standing in front of the 20-unit apartment complex in Sherman Heights that he owns and rents to homeless Veterans, Chris Blatt joined city leaders, including Mayor Kevin Faulconer, City Councilmember Todd Gloria, and SDHC President & CEO Richard C. Gentry, at a news conference to kick off the initiative’s landlord-outreach campaign, “[Housing Our Heroes](#).” ([Watch the video.](#))

“It’s been a privilege and an honor for me to give back to my fellow Veterans, my shipmates and my brothers in arms. We all served together in one sort of capacity or another to keep this country safe and secure. It’s an honor for me to be able to provide housing which is clean and safe to allow my fellow Veterans to get back on their feet, to get reintegrated into society,” Blatt said.

The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative of [HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO](#), SDHC’s landmark three-year Homelessness Action Plan, uses the Housing First model – to provide homeless individuals with housing as quickly as possible, with supportive services as needed.

“We have an opportunity and an obligation to make sure the men and women who served our country get the help that they deserve... We can make a difference and we will make a difference this year. We’re going to get 1,000 homeless Veterans off the streets,” said Mayor Faulconer.

Mayor Faulconer first announced [the Veterans initiative](#), which includes the collaborative landlord-outreach campaign, Housing Our Heroes, during his State of the City address on January 14, 2016.

“All of us can appreciate the idea that no Veteran should live on the streets. We ought to do everything we can to serve them. The only way our region is going to end Veteran homelessness is through collaboration of all stakeholders,” said City Councilmember Gloria, who also chairs the Regional Continuum of Care Council, which coordinates millions of dollars in Federal funds for homelessness programs in the San Diego region.

The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative will invest close to \$12.5 million in Federal, City and SDHC resources to provide a path off the streets for homeless men and women who served their country.

“The funds are here. We’ve identified them. Certainly we know that the need is here. But the success of this collaborative initiative lies with landlord partnerships, as well as homeless Veterans taking advantage of those housing opportunities,” said SDHC President & CEO Gentry.

A low rental vacancy rate (currently 2.8 percent in the City of San Diego, according to the San Diego County Apartment Association) and tight competition for affordable and market-rate apartments make it difficult for homeless Veterans to obtain rental housing.

With \$4.4 million in funding, the landlord-outreach program provides incentives to landlords to rent apartments to homeless Veterans within the city of San Diego and funds to help landlords cover expenses, such as repairs that exceed security deposits upon move-out or to cover rent due to unforeseen vacancies. SDHC will also provide dedicated housing specialists to answer landlords’ questions, as well as to provide credit report and application assistance for homeless Veterans.

Landlords seeking information about The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative can call 619-578-7768 or email HousingOurHeroes@sdhc.org for more information.

In addition to Housing Our Heroes landlord outreach, the other three critical program components of The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative are:

- **Rapid Re-Housing Assistance:** More than \$1.9 million to provide rental assistance and up-front moving costs to homeless Veterans and their families who became homeless because of unexpected life experiences, such as a job loss, domestic violence or medical crisis.
- **SDHC Federal VASH Vouchers:** More than \$2.6 million in rental housing vouchers from the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with supportive services from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). These housing vouchers assist chronically homeless Veterans with an honorable discharge and a disabling condition who need supportive services.
- **SDHC Federal Housing Vouchers with Supportive Services:** More than \$3.4 million in HUD Sponsor-Based Housing Vouchers awarded by SDHC through a competitive process to nonprofit or for-profit “sponsors” to provide rental assistance as well as supportive services. SDHC will also help pay for the supportive services.

Funding sources for The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative include: a grant from the City of San Diego resulting from the ground lease of San Diego Square; proceeds from the pending sale of Hotel Metro; HUD VASH Voucher Administration Fees; HUD Extraordinary Administrative Fees for VASH Vouchers; HUD VASH rental assistance; and HUD Sponsor-Based Housing Voucher Rental Assistance.

The SDHC Board of Commissioners will vote on proposed funding for this Veteran’s initiative on February 12, and the San Diego City Council will vote on March 1.

There are between 1,000 and 1,600 homeless Veterans in the City of San Diego, based on data extrapolated from a VA analysis of the annual Homeless Point-in-Time Counts, required by HUD, which were conducted January 23, 2015, and January 23, 2014, as well as internal VA data.

The San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and the San Diego County Apartment Association have joined the City and SDHC in The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative.

“San Diego is a proud military town with thousands of Veterans choosing to remain here as they transition out of the service. Today we’re ready to engage in outreach and supportive campaigns to identify and recruit additional housing opportunities for Veterans,” said San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Jerry Sanders.

All participants in The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative must be referred to the program by SDHC’s partner agencies or organizations that provide supportive services to homeless San Diegans.

To be included, homeless Veterans can add their names to the Coordinated Assessment database, which will assess their housing needs and vulnerability to help identify those homeless Veterans who are most in need.

Agencies that will be able to add homeless Veterans to this database in the Downtown area include:

- The Neil Good Day Center; and
- The Joan Kroc Center at Father Joe’s Villages.

In addition to The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted on Tuesday to commit to provide funding for supportive services. The County’s Project One for All will create a coordinated effort with the City of San Diego, SDHC and other groups to ensure that homeless individuals with serious mental illnesses have access to a full range of services, along with housing.

“Project One for All also complements Housing Our Heroes. It offers opportunities to serve our broader Veterans population. Only by working together can we maximize our resources and create real change for the homeless community,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Ron Roberts.

Additional partners who attended the launch included Whitney Benzian, Executive Director of the San Diego division of the California Apartment Association; Jessica Chamberlain, Chief of Social Work Service for the VA San Diego Healthcare System; Jeff Hickox, President of the San Diego County Apartment Association; Phil Landis, President and CEO of Veterans Village of San Diego; and Pearl Harbor survivor Stuart Hedley, a 94-year-old Navy Veteran.

Background:

The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative is a new initiative of HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO, SDHC’s three-year Homelessness Action Plan, which will impact the lives of more than 1,500 homeless San Diegans.

HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO was announced on November 12, 2014, as a five-point action plan over three years:

1. Award Development Funds – Up to \$30 Million (up to \$10 million per year)
2. Commit up to 1,500 Federal Rental Housing Vouchers
3. Renovate Hotel Churchill – 72 Units of Permanent Supportive Housing
4. Invest “Moving to Work” Federal Funds to Acquire Property
5. Dedicate SDHC-owned Housing Units – 25 for Homeless San Diegans

In addition to The 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiatives, new initiatives for the second year of **HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO**, which were announced on December 3, 2015, include:

1. **The Guardian Scholars Program at San Diego State University (SDSU)** – Rental assistance for up to 100 students who have been homeless or at risk of homelessness.
2. **The Monarch School Project** – Federal housing vouchers for 25 families with students impacted by homelessness.
3. **Award Development Funds** – For the second consecutive year, up to \$10 million will be awarded to developers to create Permanent Supportive Housing or convert existing transitional housing to Permanent Supportive Housing, along with up to 300 Federal housing vouchers.

For more information, visit www.sdhc.org

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