



202 AFFORDABLE RENTAL APARTMENTS OPEN FOR LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES, INCLUDING HOMELESS SAN DIEGANS

SDHC awarded 51 Federal rental housing vouchers for homeless San Diegans through HOUSING FIRST- SAN DIEGO, SDHC's Homelessness Action Plan

SAN DIEGO, CA — The transformation of a drab vacant lot into glistening new rental apartments is providing affordable housing to low-income San Diegans, such as Vikki, in the Cortez Hill neighborhood of Downtown San Diego through a partnership with the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC).

“We moved into Atmosphere on April 1, and it has been a lifesaver for us. Living here, we can finally breathe again,” said Vikki, who, with her husband, lost her business, her home, and her retirement savings due to the economic downturn nearly 10 years ago.

Developed by Wakeland Housing and Development Corporation in partnership with SDHC, [Atmosphere](#) includes 202 rental apartments that will remain affordable for the next 55 years for low-income individuals and families, including homeless San Diegans.

“This represents the best of San Diego. ... Our opportunity to do a whole lot more—to get people up and get them on a path to a better life,” said Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer.

Atmosphere is also an important part of [HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO](#), SDHC's Homelessness Action Plan. SDHC awarded 51 federal rental housing vouchers to provide rental assistance to formerly homeless San Diegans who live at Atmosphere.

“I wish you could build another dozen of these. We could use them. ... We need more and more of these,” said County Supervisor Ron Roberts, the Chair of the Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH), about the Atmosphere development.

The formerly homeless San Diegans who reside at Atmosphere will also receive supportive services.

“Homelessness is first and foremost a housing crisis. It can be addressed by creating more places for people to live, coupled with those services to break the cycle of homelessness and that's why programs like Atmosphere are going to work,” said City Councilmember Chris Ward, who represents Council District 3, where Atmosphere is located at 1453 Fourth Avenue, and serves as Chair of the City Council's Select Committee on Homelessness and Vice Chair of RTFH.

The rental apartments at Atmosphere are affordable to households with incomes of 30 to 60 percent of San Diego's Area Median Income, or \$27,250 to \$54,540 a year for a family of four.

“Public-private partnerships, such as Atmosphere, which includes the Federal Government, the City Government, the County Government and the San Diego Housing Commission, are essential to create additional affordable housing for low-income and homeless families and

individuals,” said SDHC President & CEO Richard C. Gentry, who was joined at the grand opening by SDHC Commissioner Margaret Davis.

SDHC invested a \$3 million loan toward the construction of Atmosphere:

- \$2.3 million in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds, which are awarded to the City of San Diego and administered by SDHC; and
- \$700,000 from the City of San Diego’s Inclusionary Housing Fund, which is also administered by SDHC.

In addition, SDHC [authorized the issuance](#) of \$25,687,989 in Multifamily Housing Revenue Bonds, which are allocated by the State, toward the construction of Atmosphere. The bonds were approved by the San Diego City Council, sitting as the Housing Authority of the City of San Diego.

Additional funding sources toward the total development cost of more than \$79 million included a Civic San Diego loan of \$11.6 million from former redevelopment funds and \$3.4 million from the State Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), which is administered by the County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services Division.

“What really makes us happy as a nonprofit corporation is the day we get the (Certificate of Occupancy), and people start moving in. Because it really is, at the end of the day, about the people that we’re trying to serve and the people that we’re trying to provide with an opportunity,” said Wakeland Housing and Development Corporation President & CEO Ken Sauder.

The grand opening of Atmosphere marks the completion of the first development that was authorized by the City of San Diego’s Affordable Housing Master Plan, approved by the San Diego City Council on May 13, 2013, which authorized Civic San Diego to use funds that were carried over after the State of California dissolved redevelopment agencies in 2012.

“The Atmosphere project is really a testament to the commitment to continue the development of affordable housing in this post-redevelopment era,” Civic San Diego President Reese Jarrett said.

Atmosphere provides 41 studios, 42 one-bedroom apartments, 76 two-bedroom apartments, and 46 three-bedroom apartments in a 12-story building. There are three managers’ units for which affordability restrictions do not apply.

Supportive services for the 51 formerly homeless residents at Atmosphere will be provided by People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) and Community Research Foundation (CRF):

- 31 units for adults with mental illness;
- 10 units for seniors; and
- 10 units for adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

“With five more projects like this, we can transform Downtown San Diego, and create pathways out of homelessness,” said Simonne Ruff, Director of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, which provided a predevelopment loan for Atmosphere. She noted that there are an estimated 1,200 homeless individuals living in the Downtown area on any given night.

Among the formerly homeless individuals who now have a home at Atmosphere are 25-year-old Malaka and her 9-month-old daughter.

“I never knew what it was like to have a place to call my own until now,” Malaka said.

An open central courtyard, three levels of underground parking, community rooms and a rooftop terrace are among the amenities at Atmosphere.

The development also includes photovoltaic solar panels powering the common area, low-emissive energy-efficient windows, Energy Star-rated appliances, low-water-use landscaping and low-flow water fixtures.

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

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