



SAN DIEGO
HOUSING
COMMISSION

Media Contact:

Maria Velasquez

Vice President Community Relations & Communications

619-578-7550 mariav@sdhc.org

NEWS RELEASE

July 14, 2010

ONE-STOP HOMELESS CENTER PROPOSAL HEADED TO SAN DIEGO CITY COUNCIL

San Diego, CA—Following a public outreach effort, the City Council’s Land Use & Housing Committee (LUH) today advanced a proposal to create a “one stop” homeless center in downtown San Diego that would be anchored by a full-service community health clinic.

The proposal calls for converting the city owned former World Trade Center at 1250 Sixth Avenue into a facility that would house up to 225 homeless people and provide comprehensive rehabilitation services ranging from medical services to substance abuse treatment.

The LUH committee’s recommendations are as follows:

- City Council authorize staff to negotiate with the Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Diego the disposition of the City-owned World Trade Center building to the Agency.
- City Council authorize the Agency to enter into exclusive negotiations with the developer for development and operations of the one-stop homeless center.

The LUH committee also asked the San Diego Housing Commission, which has been facilitating the city’s efforts to address homelessness, to examine the feasibility of other sites in the downtown area.

City Attorney Jan Goldsmith said the project could help the city reach a legal settlement to lift a 2006 court injunction preventing police from issuing illegal lodging tickets to homeless people for sleeping on sidewalks, doorways and vacant lots.

The “one stop” concept for the 14-story World Trade Center evolved from a volunteer citizen’s selection committee that was coordinated by the San Diego Housing Commission at the request last year of the LUH Committee.

The selection committee earlier this year recommended the project be developed by Connections Housing, a partnership comprised of Los Angeles-based People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), a local developer, Affirmed Housing Group, and Family Health Centers of San Diego.

(MORE)

Today's action by the LUH committee follows its initial review of the plan on April 21, 2010, when the selection committee instructed the development team to explain the proposal to downtown residents and business owners, and listen to the community's feedback.

Connections Housing conducted a 10-week public outreach campaign that included 15 presentations to community groups and several other one-on-one meetings with local officials and opinion leaders. A Web site (www.sdconnections.org) describing the project was created. An informational flyer was mailed to 2,000 residents and businesses within a quarter-mile radius of the World Trade Center.

While the outreach effort was underway, PATH conducted a one-day census that counted about 250 homeless people living in the center of downtown. Based on about 40 in-person interviews, PATH determined that the chronically homeless in downtown are an aging population with clear ties to the area rather than transients from outside the region. PATH also concluded that most of the homeless would be good candidates for a program linking them to subsidized housing.

The service center would include 150 dormitory style rooms to serve as "transitional" housing where homeless persons could stay for up to two years while they rebuild their lives. Another 75 single-room apartments would provide permanent, low-cost housing. The health clinic, which would be located on the first floor, would offer low-cost medical services to the community as well as homeless people.

Connections Housing has proposed forming a neighborhood advisory board that would meet monthly to address concerns about the project's impact to downtown businesses and residents. The partnership is also proposing a "good neighbor" covenant which would establish enforceable guidelines governing the operation of the homeless center.

Total project costs are estimated at \$31 million to \$34.4 million. Renovations costing an estimated \$18 million to \$21.5 million would start in November 2011 and take approximately a year to complete, allowing the homeless to begin occupying the rooms beginning in December 2012. Annual operating costs are estimated at \$3 million.

The Centre City Development Corp. has \$10 million available to purchase the city owned World Trade Center in addition to about \$3 million in its Health and Human Services Loan Program. Connections Housing has asked the Housing Commission for a \$2 million loan and to provide ongoing rent subsidies for as many as 75 homeless people.

The project is intended to eventually replace the city's emergency winter shelter program as well as the Neil Good Day Center, which offers showers, storage and laundry facilities to homeless people in the downtown area.

Background:

- The "one-stop" concept proposed for the World Trade Center was recommended as the more feasible of two competing proposals reviewed by a volunteer selection committee comprised of downtown residents, social service experts, and government officials;

(MORE)

- The nine-member committee, which met for about eight months beginning in June 2009, was coordinated by the San Diego Housing Commission at the request of the City Council per the recommendation of the Land Use & Housing Committee;
- A report published in June 2010 by the Regional Task Force on the Homeless estimated that 8,506 homeless people are living in San Diego County, an increase of 7.8 percent over the number counted in 2009;
- The Regional Task Force's 2009 census estimated there were 800 homeless people in the area encompassing the downtown ZIP code, 92101;
- PATH is a nonprofit organization founded in 1984. Its motto: "A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out."
- In 2002, PATH built a three-story, 40,000-square-foot regional homeless center in Los Angeles that houses nearly two dozen social service agencies and a 98-bed transitional housing program.
- According to PATH's Web site, more than 100 communities have toured this homeless center "in order to replicate this national model;"
- Affirmed Housing Group is a San Diego-based affordable housing developer specializing in tax-credit and tax-exempt bond financed multi-family and single family developments; and
- Family Health Centers of San Diego is the second largest federally qualified health center in the United States with 28 locations in San Diego County.

###

*The **San Diego Housing Commission** is a public agency working to expand affordable housing opportunities in the City of San Diego. Each year, the agency helps nearly 76,000 low-income individuals with affordable housing through award-winning programs that benefit the city's economy and revitalize neighborhoods.*