

**NEWS RELEASE**

Thursday, September 13, 2007

**San Diego Housing Commission's President & CEO  
announces retirement**

*Elizabeth C. Morris to complete a 35-year career in affordable housing*

SAN DIEGO – After 35 years of dedicated service in the affordable housing and community development field, Elizabeth C. Morris, President & CEO of the San Diego Housing Commission, announced today that she will retire, effective January 15, 2008.

Morris joined the Housing Commission in 1979 shortly after its formation. Since becoming President & CEO in 1994, she has grown the public agency from a fledgling traditional housing authority to a comprehensive, multi-faceted organization that provides affordable housing opportunities to more than 80,000 lower income individuals each year. During her tenure, the agency's budget has grown from \$95 million to \$231 million, and the breadth of programs and services has expanded exponentially.

"Betsy is highly respected for her program achievements and her policy leadership both locally and nationally," said San Diego City Council President Scott Peters. "She has built the Housing Commission into a nationally recognized agency by merging sound business practices and fiscal accountability with compassion and heart for the people her agency serves."

In addition to helping 12,400 families pay rent in private housing each month, the Housing Commission has partnered with developers to facilitate the development of nearly 25,000 homes, of which 12,000 are currently affordable. The organization has also helped 4,300 families buy their first home, has assisted 10,000 owners in repairing their houses, and advises the San Diego City Council on housing policy matters.

Morris' major accomplishments include creating a local affordable housing trust fund; successfully advocating for inclusionary zoning; building collaborations to house people with special needs; and spearheading the relocation of the agency's headquarters to a new "green" office building at Smart Corner, a mixed-use, transit-oriented development in downtown San Diego.

"Betsy has been the consistent and enduring force in the midst of San Diego's affordable housing challenges and triumphs," said Councilmember Toni Atkins. "She has earned the respect of stakeholders across the spectrum, from affordable housing advocates to the building industry, and has reshaped a city's approach to affordable housing. It is difficult to imagine the Housing Commission without her, but she has built a vibrant, healthy organization that is well-positioned to move forward."

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Most recently, the Housing Commission learned that its groundbreaking proposal to transition out of the federal public housing program has been approved by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. This will allow the agency to remove its 1,366 public housing units from a restrictive federal framework, protect its residents, and leverage real estate assets to build more housing.

“Betsy has been a tireless champion committed to strengthening communities and quality of life for all individuals,” said Sherm Harmer, president of Urban Housing Partners, incoming president of the San Diego Building Industry Association, and past president of the California Building Industry Association. “Her trademark collaborative and creative approach to problem-solving has earned her the admiration of an entire city and beyond. Her contributions to affordable and workforce housing will be recognized and realized for decades to come.”

During Morris' tenure, the agency has won more than 100 national awards. This year, Morris was inducted into the California Housing Hall of Fame. In further recognition of her many contributions, Morris will be receiving the M. Justin Herman Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO). This capstone award will be given to Morris on October 28, 2007, at NAHRO's national conference in San Diego.

The San Diego City Council, which sits as the Housing Authority, will form a search committee to begin a nationwide recruitment for a successor. Council President Scott Peters intends to recommend that Carrol Vaughan, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, serve as interim President & CEO following Morris' last day and until a successor is named.

#### **About the San Diego Housing Commission**

*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 more than 80,000 low-income individuals with affordable housing through award-winning programs that benefit the city's economy and revitalize neighborhoods.*

*With an annual budget of \$231 million, the agency applies its resources to three major areas of work:*

- *As a **Traditional Public Housing Agency**, SDHC helps more than 12,400 families pay rent in private housing each month; owns and manages nearly 1,750 apartments; and provides residents with academic support and career development tools.*
- *As a **Housing Finance Partner**, the agency provides favorable financing and other incentives to help nonprofit and for-profit developers create affordable housing (25,000 units built to date, of which 12,000 are currently affordable). The agency has also provided technical and financial assistance to 4,300 home buyers and 10,000 low-income owners of homes in need of repair; assists in development of supportive housing; and manages an extensive loan portfolio.*
- *As a **Policy Advisor**, SDHC helps shape the city's affordable housing programs by providing policy advice to the San Diego City Council.*

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