

PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVES CUTTING-EDGE DOWNTOWN SENIOR WELLNESS CENTER

Decision Rejects Centre City Development Corp.'s Recommendation

SAN DIEGO – March XX, 2009 – Low-income seniors scored a huge victory as the City of San Diego Planning Commission voted 7-0 approving a 20-year conditional use permit for Senior Community Centers to open the Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center downtown.

"We could never consider leaving downtown with so many low-income seniors who need our services," said Paul Downey, president and CEO of Senior Community Centers. "Thanks to the Planning Commission's approval, we have been given the green light to realize our vision to transform the traditional senior center into a 21st century hub for innovative services that help seniors living at or near poverty prolong their independence, enhance their quality of life and promote their overall health."

The plan to build the cutting-edge senior center was put in jeopardy last month when the Centre City Development Corp. voted 5-1 to recommend that the Planning Commission reject Senior Community Centers' request for a permit with a 20-year renewal. Instead, the board recommended a five-year renewal, after which Senior Community Centers' could earn a five-year extension by submitting a development plan for a high-rise, mixed-use building on the property before the fifth year.

At issue with the site of the new senior center is a zoning ordinance that stipulates organizations providing free meals need to be spaced at least one-quarter mile apart from each other. Senior Community Centers is affected by this code as it serves meals twice a day through its well-known nutrition program. However, all suitable downtown locations fall under this rule, leading Senior Community Centers to apply for the conditional use permit to get an exemption.

The facility, to be located at Fourth Avenue and Beech Street, will not only house Senior Community Centers' existing, nationally recognized programs, but will also allow the nonprofit group to implement state-of-the-art, cutting-edge programs and services designed to help today's active seniors thrive. In addition to helping low-income seniors in San Diego, the center is poised to act as a national model for the next generation of senior services.

In December 2008, Senior Community Centers received its largest donation ever when Rancho Santa Fe residents Gary and Mary West made a \$3 million contribution through their foundation to help open the Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center.

Senior Community Centers is a nonprofit agency helping low-income seniors thrive by providing meals, social, medical and mental health services, homeless and housing assistance, and cultural activities. For more information, visit www.servingseiors.org, or call 619/235-6572.