Ernest and Evelyn Rady Pledge Support for $100M Salvation Army Service Center Downtown

The Salvation Army’s downtown site, slated for redevelopment. Photo credit: SalvationArmySD via Facebook
The local branch of the Salvation Army has secured the support of Ernest and Evelyn Rady for the $100 million Rady Center development project at the organization’s Centre City facility.

This new Rady Center, a long-term partnership with local nonprofit Wakeland Housing and Development Corporation, will lead to replacing the Salvation Army’s current structure on Seventh Avenue with a nearly 200,000-square-foot facility.

The center, planned to be community and neighborhood friendly, will expand services already provided to homeless people and those facing food insecurity.

Officials will provide food assistance and senior meals, while more than tripling shelter and support services to get men and women off the streets, with a goal of establishing a path to independence or the use of permanent supportive housing.

Along with interim and long-term transitional housing, the Rady Center also will offer bridge housing for men and women exiting rehab programs as well as supportive and affordable housing units for rent.

The Salvation Army has launched a capital fundraising campaign for the project, which includes shelter construction, support services, programming and a chapel.

The Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies offered a lead gift of $10 million. Salvation Army officials said they have secured $21 million in gifts and pledges to fulfill their $30 million goal for the project.
Once the organization hits the $30 million threshold, the Radys have promised to match it, while providing a bonus of $5 million. The donation would continue a partnership launched four years ago.

The Salvation Army said it would designate the $35 million as a permanent endowment for its homeless programs in San Diego, at the Rady Residence, now open, and the planned Rady Center.

“We have great confidence in this organization, so we are happy to put our resources in their hands and we look forward to a successful conclusion. I’m really proud of what we’re doing,” Ernest Rady said.

Wakeland Housing and Development Corporation will serve as the lead developer, managing the entitlement phase, financing, design and construction, and will provide ongoing asset management once the center opens. Wakeland officials will seek tax credits and other public and private funding to secure additional financing for the project.

The Salvation Army aims to have funding secured by the end of 2023, with demolition and construction expected in early 2024. If all goes as planned, the Rady Center could open in 2026.