

THE SUN

POINT OF VIEW

San Bernardino can't afford to lose New House

By Kim Carter

For far too long the city of San Bernardino has missed out on great opportunities that would improve the quality of life for its residents. We can look at the E Street corridor, the Carousel Mall and the elusive Lakes and Streams project that never materialized because willing investors were met with insurmountable amounts of red tape.

Today, we have a top-notch treatment provider named Inland Valley Recovery Services (IVRS) coming to the rescue of New House Inc., which provides rehabilitative services to the residents of San Bernardino.

As many of you know, the economy took its toll on our fair city, and New House's operating capital has diminished and they were facing closure after being in existence for more than 28 years. Luckily, IVRS came to the rescue to continue to provide those critical services to our residents.

Now that IVRS has come in to fully remodel the existing facilities, it is facing red tape almost every step of the way by the city of San Bernardino.

The reality is that the "old" New

House had never been in full compliance with the city or state regulations but was allowed to operate, even passing all safety and fire requirements, in addition to being licensed by the state Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. It was also supported by the city of San Bernardino's community development block grant funds, a federal program which requires that all of its awardees prove compliance with local laws.

IVRS was completely justified in assuming that our fair city supported the existence of New House.

Now here we are in 2012 and all IVRS wants to do is the right thing — make sure everything is nice, clean and appropriate. When the agency recently asked the city what needed to be done to extend the permit of the properties that have been occupied all these years, they were forced to submit a permit application to the Planning Commission.

On paper, this made it seem like an expansion of the 1978 conditional use permit, when in reality New House did seek guidance from the city back in 2005 and was told to continue on with their affairs.

I currently am very confused as to why the city would spend so much energy and money fighting IVRS over a conditional use permit for a property that has been occupied for the past 20 years, particularly during a time when the city is experiencing bankruptcy. It makes no sense to me at all.

Listen, the reason I write this is to share my fear that we are turning away quality services that this area deserves. We cannot afford to lose such a crucial and successful program like New House. When IVRS gave New House a helping hand, it was dilapidated, hanging on by a thread.

They came to preserve something that was going to be lost, and to bring it up to standard again. We can't let San Bernardino turn away another resource. We cannot lose this great service that has been changing the lives of fathers, mothers and children for the past 28 years.

I encourage you today to stand with me and call the Planning Commission, call the city let officials know: Enough is enough.

Kim Carter is executive director of Time for Change Foundation in San Bernardino. She is a reader member of The Sun's editorial board.