

## Habitat director Tony Miranda leaving Fresno after 17 years

By BoNhia  
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Tony Miranda, executive director of the Habitat for Humanity Fresno County, at the under-construction Hope Village in southeast Fresno. Miranda is leaving Fresno after 17 years to take the top job at the Bakersfield affiliate.

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- Tony Miranda is leaving Habitat for Humanity Fresno County after 17 years with the international Christian housing ministry that builds and renovates homes.
- Miranda will become executive director of the Bakersfield affiliate known as Habitat for Humanity Golden Empire.
- Torin Blount, Habitat's ReStore manager, was named interim director while a statewide search is conducted to fill the position.

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Tony Miranda planned to live in Fresno only for a month while volunteering at Habitat for Humanity Fresno County in exchange for a place to live in the summer of 1997.

One month turned into 17 years and the construction of nearly 100 homes for low-income families in an unexpected career as the nonprofit homebuilder's executive director.

Friday is Miranda's last day with the Fresno affiliate of the international Christian housing ministry that builds and renovates homes. He's leaving to take the top job at Habitat's Bakersfield office, an affiliate that "is ready to grow and expand," Miranda said from his central Fresno office last week.

"I knew I had been here for some time, so the last couple years I've been evaluating what my strengths are and where the affiliate is and could be going," said Miranda, 43, who enjoys working on the internal, organizational side of the business.

"I think the board is excited to think about how the affiliate can grow and serve more families," he said. "Maybe someone with skill sets a little different than mine can help fuel that next season in the life of the affiliate."

Miranda came to Fresno from Denver, where he worked odd jobs and was not "putting the pieces of life together in a way that worked," he said.

A college friend enjoyed volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and felt like he was doing something meaningful. That's something Miranda said he lacked. Miranda called Habitat and learned about a volunteer opportunity with the Fresno office.

Miranda came to Fresno in the dead heat of summer with no construction experience. He served as the unpaid volunteer coordinator for the bare-bones organization that had only one full-time and one part-time employee at the time.

A year and a half later, Miranda was hired as an employee. When local founder and director Jackie Holmes retired in 2001, Miranda became interim executive director and was later appointed to the top job.

"The board knew his experience was limited and said, 'We're going to support you and get you training and help you in this role,'" said Robin Goldbeck, who sat on the board at the time and has been a volunteer for more than 20 years. The decision was "largely based on seeing that he had a heart for the ministry that Habitat was. We believed in his ability and desire to grow."

Under his 14-year leadership, Miranda worked on growing the agency and creating partnerships with community organizations and corporate sponsors. The budget grew from \$238,000 annually to more than \$2 million. The staff also increased to 11 full-time and seven part-time employees.

Ninety-two houses were built in Fresno, Clovis, Parlier, Orange Cove and Lemoore during Miranda's tenure, including seven of 89 homes in the Crossroads subdivision at Jensen and Fruit avenues in southwest Fresno. Miranda considers finishing that project as one of the highlights of his career.

In 2007, the agency opened a retail outlet called ReStore to sell new and gently used building materials at discount prices. The proceeds help support the construction of Habitat homes.

Three years later, when funding became scarce during the recession, the agency began neighborhood revitalization efforts in the area around its 11-home Clara North subdivision in southwest Fresno. The goal was to support the families and surrounding neighborhoods where Habitat builds homes, Miranda said.

Habitat worked with Every Neighborhood Partnership on the revitalization project. The partnership brings churches together with schools to address neighborhood needs.

"They (Habitat) focus on housing, but know housing is one sliver" in making a family or neighborhood whole, said Artie Padilla, executive director of the partnership.

Padilla was sad to hear that Miranda will be leaving.

"We need more leaders like that in Fresno," Padilla said. "We don't want them leaving Fresno. When I think of

leadership, that's the type of leadership I would love for all to have.”

Habitat's board of directors has appointed Torin Blount, the ReStore manager, to serve as interim executive director until a replacement is found.

The search will be conducted statewide, said board president Sammy Renteria. The goal is to fill the position in three to six months.

“We're very happy for (Miranda) accepting a new role,” Renteria said. “He did a great job with our affiliate here, and no doubt he will do the same with the Bakersfield affiliate.”

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