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Plymouth Housing and Bellwether Housing Celebrate First Affordable High-Rise Development in 50 Years

Blake House and The Rise on Madison provide 362 total units of new housing

SEATTLE – May 23, 2023 – [Plymouth Housing](#) and [Bellwether Housing](#), nonprofits that provide permanent supportive housing and affordable housing, respectively, today celebrated the opening of the first affordable high-rise in Seattle in more than 50 years with a ribbon cutting ceremony and tours of the 17-story tower. Karen Lee, CEO of Plymouth Housing, Susan Boyd, CEO of Bellwether Housing, Julie Timm, CEO of Sound Transit, and Rep. Frank Chopp gave remarks on the importance of partnership in providing solutions to ending the homelessness crisis in King County and the positive impact the building will have on the lives of residents and the First Hill community.

The ambitious effort was made possible by a \$0 land transfer from Sound Transit in 2018. In addition to its proximity to health care providers in the neighborhood, Plymouth is partnering with Swedish Health Services to provide onsite health care services, including behavioral health services, to residents.

“Today we have reason to celebrate. This building is proof that we can make real strides toward ending homelessness in our region” said Karen Lee, CEO of Plymouth Housing. “When we came to Sound Transit with an idea for this site, they understood how important it was to provide homes for people experiencing chronic homelessness. When we asked Bellwether to join us, we gained a partner who is doing transformative work providing homes for individuals and families. And of course, we wouldn't be here today if it weren't for our community, and the support of the First Hill neighborhood.”

Within the 17-floor building are two distinct apartment complexes. Plymouth will operate Blake House on floors two through five, with a total of 112 studio apartments focused on serving seniors and veterans who have experienced chronic homelessness. In addition to three live-in staff apartments, Blake House features three community rooms, a second-floor outdoor courtyard and a computer lab for residential use.

Named for a long-time local housing advocate, Blake House honors the legacy of Blake Nordstrom.

For more than 25 years, Blake Nordstrom contributed his time and energy toward various efforts to end homelessness in Seattle. As supporters of Plymouth Housing, Blake and the Nordstrom family both championed Plymouth's mission in the community and invested in programs that benefited Plymouth

residents, including an economic empowerment program at Nordstrom Rack for residents of Plymouth's former Gatewood Hotel on 1st and Pine Street.

Bellwether will operate The Rise on Madison (The Rise) on floors six through 17. The Rise will provide 250 homes affordable to families making 60% or less of area median income with 10% of those homes featuring two and three bedrooms. Rents will range from \$1,015 for a studio to \$1,783 for a three-bedroom unit. There is a large community room on floor 17 featuring a full kitchen, a large screen television, ample seating and sweeping views of the Sound. It's complimented by a large outdoor patio off the main sitting area. The Rise also features a computer lab and a children's play area.

Together, the building provides a total of 362 supportive and affordable housing units.

"This development represents so much of what is great about Seattle—support for an innovative development that will serve a broad range of needs, collaboration among committed partners, and a deep commitment to ensure that lower income people have a place in this city," Bellwether CEO Susan Boyd said. "I'm grateful for our state and local government leaders who made this development a priority, to neighborhood leaders who were active proponents of the project, and to the brilliant and committed staff at Plymouth and Bellwether Housing who worked so hard to make this happen."

A historic and diverse neighborhood, First Hill is densely populated with hospitals, medical clinics and higher learning institutions. The location of First Hill will be familiar to residents, many of whom have experienced homelessness within the city, while offering access to shopping, job opportunities and transit hubs. Located on Madison Street at Boylston Avenue, the new building is within walking distance of light rail, the streetcar and major bus lines, providing easy access to the city.

"The opening of The Rise on Madison and Blake House is the culmination of years of innovative collaboration to bring affordable housing to the heart of First Hill," said Sound Transit Board Chair and King County Executive Dow Constantine. "Sound Transit is pleased to have partnered with this project by donating the property, which will now provide more than 350 homes to improve the lives of low- and middle-income individuals and families, as well as seniors and veterans who have experienced chronic homelessness. With its proximity to public transit and ready access to jobs and medical care, this project stands as a shining example of equitable transit-oriented development."

Rep. Frank Chopp remarked, "This project, with The Rise on Madison and Blake House sharing the site, is a shining example of how affordable, transit-oriented housing should be accomplished. Working with Enterprise Community Partners and the Home & Hope program, I enacted a state law mandating surplus Sound Transit property be used for affordable housing. Utilizing that law, we acquired this property for free and partnering with Bellwether Housing, Plymouth Housing, and many public funders, we built a spectacular model for social housing in Washington state. Congratulations to all."

Blake House was funded with 9% low-income housing tax credit equity as well as funding from the City of Seattle, King County, the State of Washington, and the Federal Home Loan Bank. Additionally, Plymouth Housing utilized \$4.5 million from its successful PROOF campaign to support the development of this project.

The Rise was funded with tax-exempt bonds, 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity and private debt as well as funding from the City of Seattle, King County, and the State of Washington. In addition, Bellwether raised \$10 million from local philanthropists and private impact-investors to support a series of developments including The Rise.

About Bellwether Housing

Bellwether Housing is the largest private, nonprofit affordable housing provider in Seattle. Bellwether has developed, owned and operated housing for low-income individuals, families, seniors and households transitioning out of homelessness since 1980 --in total, 3,000 apartments in 35 (and counting) buildings serving over 5000 people throughout Seattle and South King County. www.bellwetherhousing.org

About Plymouth Housing

Plymouth Housing's mission is to eliminate homelessness and address its causes by preserving, developing and operating safe, quality, supportive housing and by providing adults experiencing homelessness with opportunities to stabilize and improve their lives. Plymouth follows the "Housing First" philosophy, operating on the principle that people cannot improve their lives until they have a safe, stable place to live. www.plymouthhousing.org

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