



## **August 3 is the grand opening of 66 West**

**SUMMARY:** A grand opening celebration for 66 West will take place on August 3, celebrating the 39 new homes and the young people who live there.

ST. PAUL, Minn. (July 28, 2017) – Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative will host a grand opening celebration for 66 West Apartments at 5 p.m. Thursday, August 3. Located at 3330 W. 66<sup>th</sup> Street in Edina, the 39-unit building provides homes and supportive services to young adults age 16-24.

Grand opening speakers are to include Edina Mayor Jim Hovland, State Senator Melisa Franzen, Lauren Morse-Wendt and Reverend Erik Strand from Edina Community Lutheran Church, Beacon and Simpson Housing Services executive directors and volunteer leaders.

66 West offers affordable apartments to youth from the southwestern suburbs of Hennepin County who have experienced homelessness. Simpson Housing Services staffs the building with professionals offering supportive services to the young residents. “Our Youth Advocates are on site to help them connect with employers, pursue educational goals, learn life skills and how to be a good tenant, and heal from the trauma of homelessness,” said Simpson Executive Director Steve Horsfield.

Young adults began moving into 66 West in May. The need for housing and services for homeless youth in the southwest Metro is great; service providers working directly with young adults in the western suburbs estimate they serve between 200 and 300 youth who are experiencing homelessness each year and that these numbers are growing.

66 West was made possible through the leadership of Beacon collaborating congregations Edina Community Lutheran Church, St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer, and Richfield United Methodist Church.

“Edina Community Lutheran Church members committed to doing something about young adult homelessness more than five years ago. We’re thrilled to see 66 West become a reality and to now be welcoming the young adults living at 66 West,” said Lauren Morse-Wendt, Mission & Ministry Developer at Edina Community Lutheran Church.

The project garnered widespread community and city support and \$8.3 million from Minnesota Housing, the state's housing administration agency. In addition, 28 community members have stepped forward as Angel Donors, each sponsoring a home with a gift of \$50,000. "We're so grateful to the individuals and families who have made this commitment to young people. As we celebrate the grand opening, we're hopeful that the final 11 Angel Donors will step forward to sponsor the remaining homes," said Beacon Executive Director, Lee Blons.

"We believed that 66 West would transform lives through supportive housing, and we can see it happening already. We thank the City of Edina, Minnesota Housing, other funders and all the local congregations, especially Edina Community Lutheran Church that led the way to develop grassroots support for 66 West," Blons added.

"Simpson is honored to partner with Beacon to provide these critical stabilization services to young adults at 66 West. It's communities working together that can end homelessness – this project is an important example of such a community response and I hope it can be repeated to provide more safe and affordable housing to young adults," said Simpson Executive Director Steve Horsfield.

The grand opening event starts at 5:00PM with a short program at 5:30pm. Guests are encouraged to RSVP at <http://www.beaconinterfaith.org/events/66-west-grand-opening> in order to receive day of event updates and parking information.

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**About Beacon** | Beacon is a collaborative of more than 90 congregations ending homelessness through housing, shelter and advocacy. | [www.beaconinterfaith.org](http://www.beaconinterfaith.org)

**About Simpson Housing Services** | Our mission is to house, support and advocate for people experiencing homelessness. We believe that everybody has the right to safe affordable housing. | [www.simpsonhousing.org](http://www.simpsonhousing.org)

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