



July 12 groundbreaking signals construction start at Edina's 66 West housing for homeless youth

SUMMARY: A groundbreaking ceremony July 12 will mark the construction start at 66 West featuring 39 units of affordable, supportive housing for youth who have experienced homelessness.

ST. PAUL, Minn. (June 29, 2016) – Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative will host a groundbreaking celebration at 5 p.m. Tuesday, July 12, at the site of the future 66 West, housing for youth emerging from homelessness.

The 39-unit building will cost about \$11.2 million to build, and another \$500,000 a year to provide services to the young tenants.

66 West will offer affordable apartments to youth from the southwestern suburbs of Hennepin County who have experienced homelessness. Simpson Housing Services will staff the building with professionals offering supportive services to the youth to help them heal from the trauma of homelessness, connect with employers and pursue educational goals.

Event speakers are to include Cathy ten Broeke, Minnesota's director to prevent and end homelessness; Edina Mayor Jim Hovland; state Sen. Melisa Franzen; and Beacon and Simpson Housing Services executive and volunteer leaders.

The project garnered widespread community and city support and \$8.3 million from Minnesota Housing, the state's housing administration agency. In addition, Beacon must secure annual private and public funding commitments for about \$500,000 to provide needed on-site supportive services.

Supportive services are the key to helping young adults who have been on the streets or in shelters or otherwise lacking a stable home to be part of a supportive community and to achieve their employment and educational goals.

"We know that 66 West will transform lives through supportive housing. 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," said Beacon Executive Director Lee Blons.



Edina Community Lutheran Church (ECLC) is Beacon’s lead collaborating congregation for 66 West. The congregation led local efforts to prioritize the issue of youth homelessness and directed more than \$100,000 from its own capital campaigns toward 66 West. Beacon collaborates with more than 80 Twin Cities congregations to end homelessness through housing, shelter and advocacy.

“We are honored to partner with Beacon to provide these critical stabilization services to young people at 66 West. Simpson is part of the community solution to homelessness – this project is an excellent representation of community response, as it takes all of us working together to clear the path for our residents at 66 West,” said Simpson Executive Director Steve Horsfield.

Members of ECLC and other Beacon collaborating congregations helped to turn out hundreds of supporters at key Edina planning commission and city council meetings in 2014, resulting in unanimous city approval of Beacon’s proposal to redevelop a former bank branch into housing for homeless youth. The council subsequently approved \$500,000 in tax increment financing toward 66 West.

Youth on their own age 24 and younger make up 16 percent of the homeless population in Minnesota, according to a 2015 Wilder Foundation survey. In the southwestern suburbs of Hennepin County, including Edina, Bloomington and Richfield, it’s estimated that between 200 and 300 youth and young adults experience homelessness or are at risk.

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About Beacon | Beacon is a collaborative of more than 70 congregations ending homelessness through housing, shelter and advocacy. | 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

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