



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 13, 2023

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Preserving affordable housing in Belltown

SEATTLE, WA – Community Roots Housing is rehabilitating a 98-year-old building in an effort to safeguard vital affordable housing in the heart of the city.

Community Roots Housing, a public development authority chartered by the city of Seattle in 1976, recently closed on the financing of the comprehensive renovation project at the Devonshire apartments, a three-story brick building located in Belltown. Originally built in 1925, the Devonshire provides 62 apartments affordable to households earning 50% or less of the area median income.

The restoration spans a broad scope of work including all new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. Apartment interiors will be outfitted with LED lighting, new appliances, fresh kitchen and bathroom cabinet packages, new doors, and high-performance glass. Seismic upgrades will accompany a new sprinkler system and improvements to other building-wide safety systems. To bring the Devonshire up to date with the latest version of the Seattle energy code, the exterior wall insulation, roof insulation, and all windows will be replaced during the renovation. These improvements will not only enhance energy efficiency and interior climate control, they will also extend the useful life of the building and dramatically reduce the impact of street noise. Energy recovery ventilators will be installed to further improve ventilation and provide a healthier interior air environment for residents.

With crucial support from the Seattle Office of Housing and Washington State, Community Roots was able to surmount financing and logistical obstacles frequently posed by full rehabilitations of older affordable housing buildings. Construction at the Devonshire began in late September and is expected to be complete in the autumn of 2024.

The Devonshire is a well-known landmark in the Belltown neighborhood, and close coordination between Community Roots, OAI Osborn Architects Inc., and Buchanan General Contracting ensured the character of the building will be preserved while the interior is updated to provide better quality of life for residents. Community Roots has been in regular communication with all residents and contracted a third-party organization to facilitate bespoke relocation arrangements for every household for the duration of construction.

Two of Community Roots Housing's stated values are to center residents in all work and be responsible stewards of the environment. Engaging in renovations like the one at the Devonshire allows Community Roots to improve existing built resources in an eco-friendly way while also directly impacting the quality of day-to-day life for the residents of these affordable homes. Extensive rehabilitation projects like the forthcoming work at the Devonshire embody Community Roots' commitment to not just building new affordable housing, but also preserving existing affordable housing stock in the Seattle area. Over the past 10 years, Community Roots Housing has renovated 259 apartments in nine buildings to ensure that residents can remain in their communities in quality homes.

"Preserving existing affordable housing is an important supplement to new developments – it prevents displacement, revives existing buildings, and delays carbon emissions resulting from new construction," said Thea Munchel, Vice President of Real Estate Development and Tax Credit Housing at Community Roots Housing. "The rehabilitation of the Devonshire isn't just about preserving bricks and mortar; it's about reinvesting into our existing residents and communities to ensure safe and quality affordable homes for generations to come."

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About Community Roots Housing

Everyone has the right to a quality, affordable home. At Community Roots Housing, this truth drives our work. By embracing community-led development and engaging in deep-rooted partnerships, we're fostering vibrant, equitable communities where everyone has access to safe, affordable, and welcoming homes. Today, with nearly 50 apartment buildings and over 2,000 residents, we continue our commitment to build community with and for people. Learn more at communityrootshousing.org.