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Bremerton Apartments Dedicated in Honor of House Speaker Frank Chopp

Bremerton, WA - The grand opening celebration for Frank Chopp Place, a restored apartment complex near downtown Bremerton offering affordable housing, took place on Wednesday, September 21 at Seventh Street and Chester Avenue. The old Chester Manor, once a haven for crime and drugs, has been transformed into a bright, multi-colored housing development and renamed for Speaker of the House Frank Chopp. The newly opened Frank Chopp Place has 56 affordable units for downtown workers and people living on modest incomes.

“The Low Income Housing Institute is extremely honored to rename this historic building in honor of Frank Chopp, as he is a proven leader and an inspiration to many of us working to provide affordable housing,” stated Sharon Lee, LIHI executive director. Chopp was born in 1953 in the very building that now bears his name, as it served as the former site of the Harrison Hospital. Chopp has a long and committed history of working to create and preserve low-income housing. He was a co-founder of LIHI in 1991 when it became clear that a new non-profit housing organization was needed to develop innovative solutions to the state’s housing problems. LIHI now owns over 1,500 units in a five counties in the Puget Sound region.

Chopp was a strong advocate for increasing the State Housing Trust Fund from \$80 million to \$100 million in the biennial budget, and he successfully worked with legislators statewide to double funding for farmworker housing. In 2004 Chopp received the “Housing Hero Award” from the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance. He has been deeply involved in the lengthy fight to keep the General Assistance – Unemployable (GA-U) program and to increase health care coverage for uninsured families and children. Throughout his life and political career, Chopp has displayed passion for the plight of the poor and the disenfranchised.

Chopp spoke at the opening celebration, giving a rousing speech about his youth as “a child of assisted living” and about his belief in affordable housing. “We hear a lot about freedom today...and freedom means more than just ‘freedom from fear.’ It also means freedom from want, and freedom from poverty. Freedom from poverty means having a home! There is nothing more basic than having a home!”

Also speaking at the event were Bremerton Mayor Cary Bozeman, and Bremerton City Council President Daren Nygren, both of whom offered enthusiastic praise for Chopp’s

tireless work on behalf of low-income housing. “I’m proud to be part of low-income housing,” said Mayor Bozeman, “That’s what cities should DO. And I’m proud to name this building after Frank Chopp.” The City of Bremerton provided \$1.4 million for LIHI to acquire and renovate Frank Chopp Place.

Shelly DuBois, one of the first residents of Frank Chopp Place, stepped forward at the opening to offer her thanks to everyone involved in the building’s creation. “Thank you to everyone here,” she said to the gathered crowd. “Without you, I wouldn’t have a place to live.”

The renovation project was headed by LIHI, which specializes in developing and rehabilitating homes for low-income families. The architect is Helix Design Group and the contractor is Synergy Construction. The project includes 56 studio and one-bedroom apartments, ranging in price from \$325 to \$475 per month. The project serves people who earn no more than 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI,) or less than \$22,250 for a 1-person household and \$25,400 for a 2-person household. A portion of the apartments have been set aside for homeless and disabled applicants. The housing has an on-site resident manager, computer room and community lounge.

The \$8 million dollar project was financed by the following funders and investors: City of Bremerton; Kitsap County; Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council; Washington Mutual; Washington State Housing Finance Commission; Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development; Enterprise Social Investment Corporation; Wells Fargo; KeyBank and HUD.

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