

Bud Clark Commons

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As part of the plan to reduce homelessness and create a community resource for those most in need, the new building, which celebrated its grand opening on June 2, has become a multi-faceted center, offering a day resource center to address basic needs, a 90 bed men's shelter and a 130 unit apartment complex for homeless individuals considered to be the most vulnerable.

"The commons' 130 units of housing will take a small step toward restoring a healthy balance of housing options," said Maileen Hampto, public information officer for the Portland Housing Bureau. "The day center is an essential resource for people who are currently experiencing homelessness to get connected to vital information and basic services as they apply for housing, jobs, and benefits."

The building and services were made possible through partnerships between the Portland Housing Bureau, Home Forward (formerly, the Housing Authority of Portland), Transition Projects, Inc., and Multnomah County.

The Portland Housing Bureau invested \$29.5 million to build the Bud Clark Commons, and in the first year, the city will fund operations.

Located downtown at the edge of Northwest Broadway Avenue and Hoyt Street, the center is the first of its kind in the country to earn an energy saving LEED Platinum rating and has made great strides in the initiative to end homelessness within the city.

"We don't have enough housing for people who can't afford market rent," said Rachael Duke, manager of operations and partnerships for Home Forward. "So every time we build new housing, we are helping to end people being homelessness."

Home forward, which is the largest provider of affordable housing in the state of Oregon, developed the building and manages the 130-unit apartment community.

"I think this is a great model, and it is very exciting to be here," said Duke, who has been diligently working on the project for over a year now.

Inside the new apartment building's lobby last week, Duke said they had just finished up a resident meal. Residents asked for ice trays, while other individuals were being assessed by the Home Forward team to see if they could be a future resident of a unit.

Although the complex has only been opened for two-months, she said half of the available units are already being leased, with 128 individuals already moved in or in the cue to soon make the building their new home.

"I think what is really interesting has been watching people move into the apartments," she said.

On the day it opened, the waiting list to get into the commons' affordable housing was already 150 names long. Currently, Duke said the waiting list has reached 450 individuals. "This is pretty fast paced," said Duke. "There are quite a number of people out there who could benefit."

already patients or they think will be appropriate for the housing, including Outside In, Central City Concern, Native American Rehabilitation Association and Multnomah County West Clinic.

Duke explained that rent for the residents of the affordable housing units is 30 percent of their income. "If their income is zero then they pay zero," she said. "We are working hard to help people access ben-

dedicated to serving people's basic needs as they transition from homelessness to housing, both the patio and recreation room were filled with people.

Connections, in addition to offering housing assistance for homeless individuals, also provides a number of other immediate services, including individual showers, clothing, laundry, access to residential programs, information and referrals and a computer lab, telephones and even a hair salon.

"I think this is making a huge difference," said Fern Elledge, Con-

tinuing waiting area with only 12 seats. The new facility she said is "clean and modern and has space for people to be."

Still, the center on Friday was providing services for 50 to 80 people, and according to Elise Flanders, who has worked at the day center since it opened, said "This is pretty slow right now."

While the Bud Clark Commons stands as a testament that the City of Portland has made some progress to reduce homelessness within the city, even with the new building, the need for further resources has become increasingly evident.

"The public investments we've made in the 10-Year Plan, and the effective work of our community partners, shows us that we are putting our money in the right places to end homelessness, enabling us to 'hold the line' against even greater increases in homelessness," said Hampto. "Yet, our work is not done."

Duke agreed.

"I am pretty sure we could fill up more than 130 units if we had them," she said. "It is hard to get better and make changes for your life if you don't have a home to go back to. If you can't take care of yourself then it is hard to live."

According to Hampto, the recent strategic plan made by the Portland Housing Bureau for 2011-2013 will continue to prioritize development and preservation of affordable units for the most vulnerable residents because most people simply need housing they can afford.

She said there is a need to increase the current level of funding for residential programs to finish the job of ending homelessness.

"It is scary and dangerous to live outside," said Duke. "It is hard to protect yourself and stay safe."

The 130-units at Bud Clark Commons are expected to be filled by Labor Day weekend.



PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Fern Elledge, connections director for the Bud Clark Commons, gives a tour of the new downtown housing landmark and its Transitions, Inc. day center and homeless shelter, which provides a number of immediate services for homeless people throughout the metro area.

Each week, she said, there are new people being assessed, but not all of those on the list are considered to be vulnerable to homelessness.

Because of the high need for housing, the candidates are selected through a very particular process.

efits."

According to Hampto, on a one-night count conducted in January, more than 2,700 people were homeless in Portland. Although nearly 40 percent of these individuals were in shelters, the rest were sleeping on

connections director. "It's wonderful to have the space where people can access service in dignity."

She said the old service center, located at Northwest Fifth Avenue and Glisan Street downtown, had a



PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Heather Weitman, the resident and community services coordinator for the Bud Clark Commons, conducts a screening of a potential resident for one of the building's 130-studio units. The downtown housing complex, which celebrated its grand opening on June 2, provides permanent housing for homeless individuals.

"We have organized our wait list so it is organized by vulnerability, and not time and date," Duke said.

We don't do all the assessments ourselves, she said. "We have a relationship with four different clinics that work with people who are

the streets.

The progress and success of the operations of the commons has been a team effort, Duke said.

Inside the Connections day center facility run by Transitions, Inc., an independent non-profit agency

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