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80 apartments for homeless adults to start soon in Ballard

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Compass Housing Alliance will begin construction in February on 80 studio apartments for homeless adults in Ballard.

The seven-story complex at 1753 N.W. 56th St. will be named Nyer Urness House after a deceased Compass Housing chaplain. Urness ministered to people on the streets of Seattle for decades and was a "good Norwegian," said Compass Executive Director Rick Friedhoff. "He was just a very beloved fellow."

Weinstein A|U designed the project and Walsh Construction will build it.

Other team members are Common Ground (development consultant), Wells Fargo (construction financing), National Equity Fund (equity investor), Karen Kiest Landscape Architecture, KPFF (structural engineer), and Sider + Byers (mechanical engineers).

The apartments will be near shops and parks, and also buses, which is important for people who are very poor, said Friedhoff. "If you don't have a car it's nicer in some ways to live outside the downtown core where parks and amenities you can afford are readily accessible."

Traditionally, low-income housing has been concentrated in Seattle's downtown core, International District and Pioneer Square.

Compass plans to put new projects in various Seattle neighborhoods and nearby suburbs, Friedhoff said.

About a year ago, the nonprofit housing developer and social services provider opened a 58-unit apartment building for homeless veterans in Renton and plans an apartment project in Shoreline.

Outside the city core, land costs are generally cheaper and sites are bigger so there are fewer construction issues, Friedhoff said. Also, tenants benefit from the healthy neighborhoods, and neighborhoods benefit from a range of housing, he said.

The Ballard complex will have offices for outreach workers and Compass employees on the first floor and a medical clinic operated by Neighborcare Health along with Compass offices on the second. Above will be the apartments, offices for case managers and a rooftop deck and garden.

Friedhoff said there are 2,000 homeless people on the streets of Seattle and more living in shelters. He said permanent supportive housing helps keep people off the street.

The Ballard project received support from nearby residents, but Friedhoff said a small group of property owners were opposed. He said they filed administrative appeals with the city and lost, and a lawsuit, which was dismissed.

Construction costs for the project are \$11.3 million. The land, development fees and other expenses, including legal fees, cost another \$6.4 million.



Image courtesy of Weinstein A|U [\[enlarge\]](#)
The seven-story complex will be at 1753 N.W. 56th St., and named after Nyer Urness, a deceased chaplain for Compass Housing.

Friedhoff said the costs are higher than would be expected for a project outside the city core because Compass bought the land in 2008 at the height of the market. Also it had to build a taller structure because of the tight site, and that added to the cost.

One reason Compass wanted the property is that it's near several churches that are expected to be involved with programs for the residents, Friedhoff said.

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