Our mission is to eliminate homelessness by preserving, developing and operating safe, decent, affordable housing and by providing opportunities for homeless and very low-income people to improve their lives.

Plymouth Housing Group provides permanent, supportive housing to over 1,000 formerly-homeless adults in 12 apartment buildings in the downtown Seattle area. We serve the most disadvantaged homeless people—those suffering from mental illness, chemical dependency, physical and medical disabilities and the effects of aging and poverty.
The Langdon and Anne Simons Senior Apartments
Homeless Seniors

- In 2002 an analysis of our wait list showed an increasing number of underserved homeless seniors. The Plymouth board incorporated a goal of creating more opportunities for homeless seniors into Plymouth’s Strategic Plan.

- 49% of 2009-10 new tenants are > 50
Property Description

- New Construction
- 92 studio apartments with full baths and kitchens
- Location: Urban -- downtown Seattle on major bus route and close to shopping, parks and services.
- Population: homeless single adults over age 55
  - 80% disabled with chemical addiction, mental illness, chronic illnesses, or combinations of all three
  - Average income about $600/month (12% Area Median Income)
  - Half the tenants are selected from Plymouth’s centralized wait list; half referred directly by Seattle-area shelters, public emergency rooms, the Department of Veteran’s Affairs, or the King County Veteran’s Program
  - 24 units set aside for homeless military service veterans
Financing

- Capital funding of $23M provided by
  - Low Income Housing Tax Credits;
  - Deferred loans from City of Seattle, King County, Washington state, and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle;
  - Private equity from Plymouth’s Capital Campaign.

- Operating subsidy of $778k/year provided by 92 Project-based Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers through the Seattle Housing Authority
  - tenants pay 30% of income for rent, balance provided by Seattle Housing Authority

- Ongoing funding of $275k/year for on-site social services provided by the City of Seattle Department of Human Services
Plymouth’s Role

- Plymouth is the developer and the managing member of the LLC which owns the project. Plymouth is also the property manager and service provider.

- Key partners include public capital funders, City of Seattle, the Seattle Housing Authority, United Way, and King County’s Dept of Public Health which provides nursing services on-site.
Innovations

- Private equity of $2.5M raised as part of 3 year capital campaign that raised $14M for 4 Plymouth buildings.
- Coordinated public funding as part of King County’s 10-year Plan to End Homelessness. Single application submitted to City, State, King County, and Seattle Housing Authority for capital and operating subsidy.
- Low-barrier “Housing First” model, including 44 units filled by direct referral by agencies (tenants don’t spend time on Plymouth’s waiting list).
  - Tenant screening disregards poor credit, prior evictions, most criminal history.
  - No requirements for enrollment in mental health or chemical dependency treatment: “meet people where they are.”
Lease-Up

PHG’s Housing First requires creative and relentless outreach and multiple staff trained to complete leases
On-site Services

- 24-hour front desk for building security
- 80% FTE nurse provides primary care and patient education
- 4 on-site housing case managers ensure housing stability
  - Meet immediate material needs for food and household items; help connect them to dental, mental health, chemical dependency treatment, and legal services
  - Counsel and support tenants in lease compliance
  - Connect tenants to employment and volunteer opportunities when feasible
  - Help tenants apply for public income benefits (primarily Social Security Insurance – Disability)
  - Provide life-skills counseling and community building to overcome isolation and engage tenants in meaningful activities
- 3 live-in staff for additional support in emergencies
Challenges learned from Simons

- Tenants older than ‘calendar’ age
- Increased home maintenance needs (with little accessible public funding)
- What is motivation for seniors?
- Hospitable ‘elder culture’
- Staff/tenant support around death
Successes seen at Simons

- Higher level of community participation
- Higher level of nursing engagement (95%)
- More stable income = more stable rent patterns (2% AR rent balance)
If we did it again

- Tenant Support Aide
- Participate in community collaboration about successive placement
- Greater staff training on elder cultural proficiency
- Reduce number of referral providers