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# Juneau's Housing First project takes shape

By David Purdy, KTOO | November 18, 2016 | Alcohol & Substance Abuse , Housing , Juneau , Mental Health   

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*The Housing First facility under construction. (Photo by David Purdy/KTOO)*

Juneau is getting a new kind of apartment building. The [Housing First Project](#) in Lemon Creek is built to provide safe, affordable housing to the city's most vulnerable homeless individuals.

The outside of the building looks mostly finished, but inside the apartments are still bare plywood and studs. Each of the 32 efficiency apartments is small – about as big as a row of three parking spaces. Each one will have its own private bathroom and a small kitchen area.

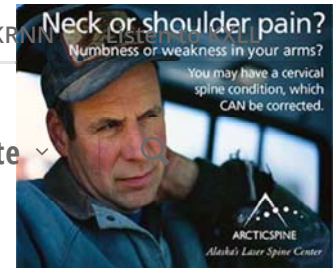
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Workers **broke ground** for the facility in May, but the concept has been in progress for over four years. Almost a dozen organizations and agencies have been involved. The **Glory Hole**, Juneau's downtown homeless shelter, is managing the project. Mariya Lovishchuk is the executive director of the Glory Hole.

"I am just so excited to be standing in this building right now and, like, actually have a floor and walls and windows and not just, like, an idea in my head," said Lovishchuk. "That's really, really awesome. And also I can't wait — like, I can't wait to see people in here."

Lovishchuk said the future residents will be the most at-risk chronically homeless individuals in Juneau, as measured by a **vulnerability survey**. Lovishchuk said this building will be a place for people to live who have had trouble with other housing programs.

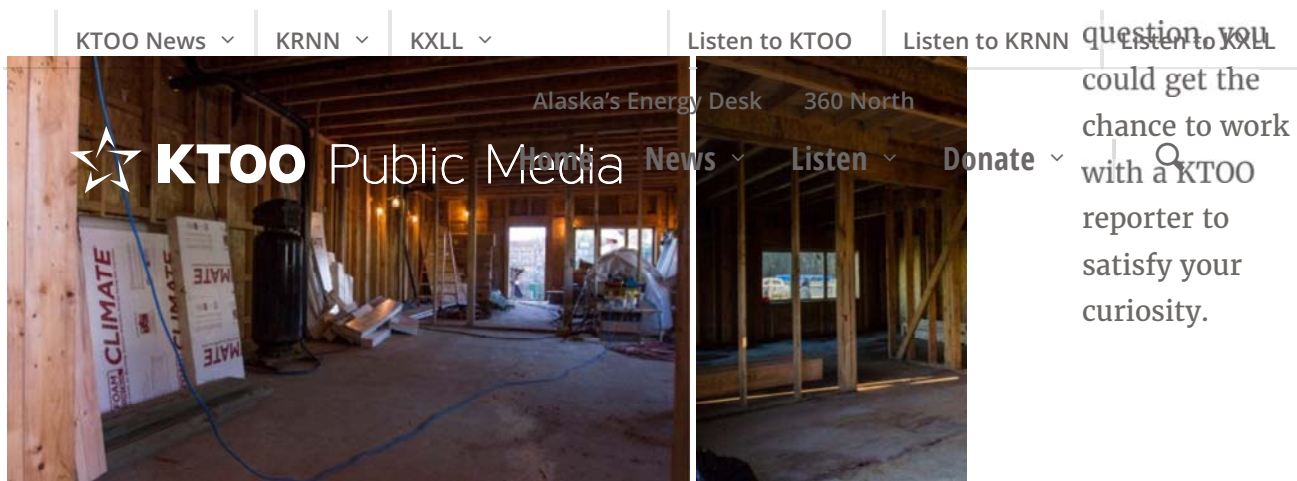
"They end up getting evicted because there are rules about drinking," she said, "And people are not able to follow those rules and so they get evicted because of that, or people have to participate in treatment and people fail out of that housing because treatment has not worked for them even though they've tried, like many of our clients have been to treatment programs, you know 20 times in their lives with no success."

The Housing First approach does not require treatment or sobriety as a condition of housing. Services and treatment for residents will be available in the building, and will include medical exam rooms and a space for mental health counseling.



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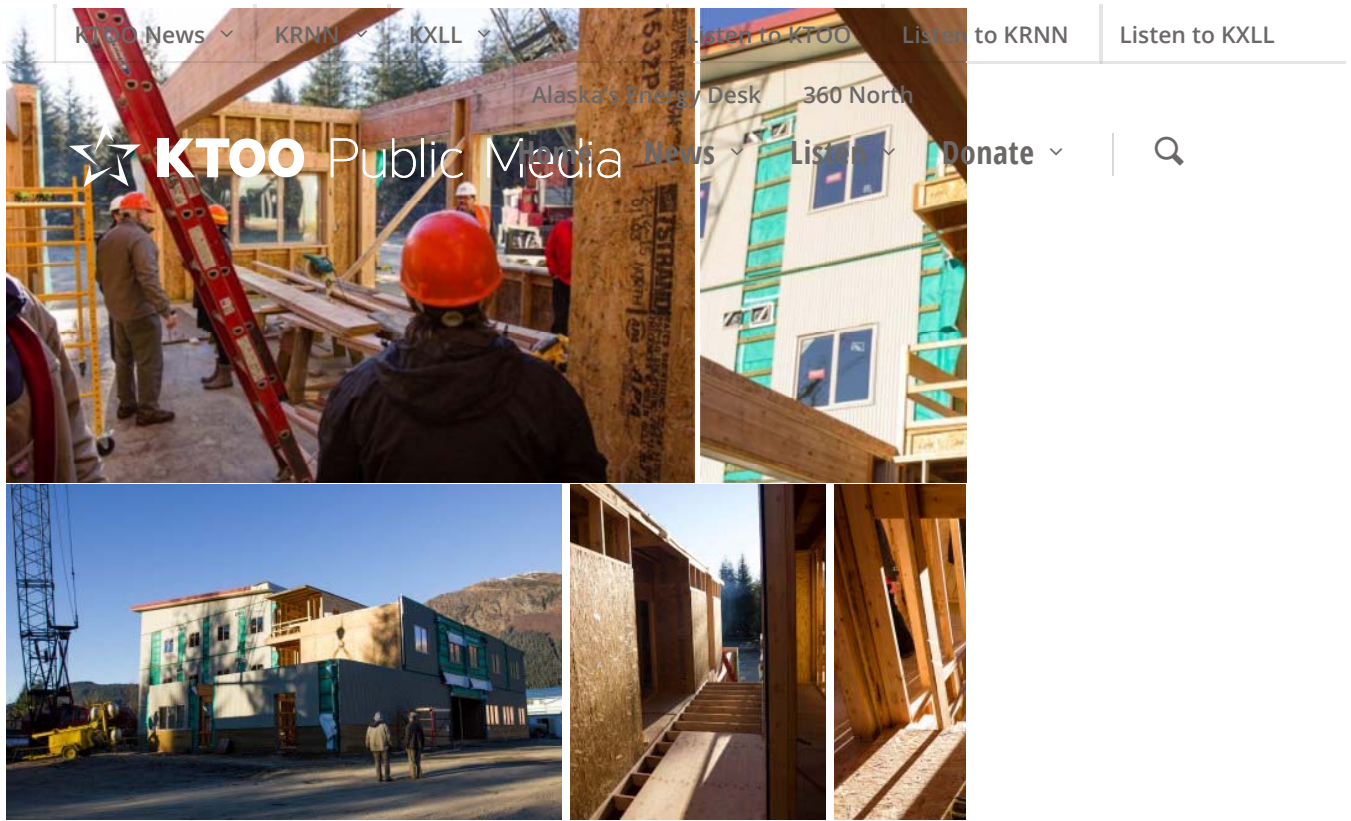
Supporters of housing first say that having a stable place to live makes it easier to address the underlying causes of homelessness.

The transition to housing can be rocky for people who have been homeless for a long time. The Housing First facility in Anchorage, [Karluk Manor](#), has found it challenging to track down people on the waiting list and help them adjust to the housing facility. They have placed restrictions on visitors and certain types of alcohol.

The Juneau Housing First Project still needs about a million dollars, which it plans to raise with capital grants and local support through the [Juneau Community Foundation](#).

Lovishchuk expects that facility will be completed in May and the first residents will be able to move in by early summer.





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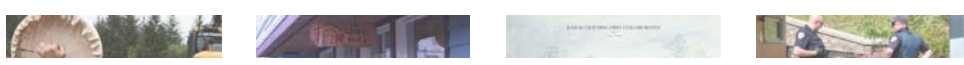
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