Why Buy at Columbia 26

“Columbia City has undergone and is still undergoing an amazing transformation from when I was a child growing up in south Seattle. I love how this neighborhood has turned around.”

—Michael King, a single dad, reserved a home at Columbia 26. He looks forward to giving his 7-year-old daughter the stability that comes from homeownership.

“We’re happy that we’ll be able to access groceries, library, parks and cafes by walking. Also, being just a short bike ride from the lake will be good as well.”

—George Kindl and his wife Ewa Lichnowska have been working with Homestead since 2008. They are excited to leave behind the uncertainty of renting so their 3-year old daughter can grow up at Columbia 26.

Putting the Finishing Touches on Columbia City Homes

Spring is just around the corner and so is the next chapter for Homestead’s biggest project to date. We expect to make the first 12 townhomes in Columbia 26 available for sale in April.

Completing the construction of Columbia 26 is an exciting moment for the Homestead community. When the original developer left the project partially constructed, Homestead was able to buy them at a discount. Thanks to help from many partners, we’ve transformed a once derelict property into a community of high-quality, modern homes for modest-income families right in the heart of one of Seattle’s most vibrant and fastest growing neighborhoods. We’re so excited to show them off that we’re offering “Sneak Peak” showings, before the dust even settles.

We’re pretty sure you’ll love the two-bedroom, 2.5-bathroom homes with attached garage, laundry facilities, bonus room, granite countertops, hardwood or bamboo floors, stainless steel appliances and lots of light. After all, priced at around $200,000, these three-story townhomes are unforgettable and affordable in a neighborhood experiencing fast-increasing property values. If you can though, plan to spend a bit of time getting to know Columbia City while you’re in the neighborhood for your Sneak Peek. We think you’ll like what you see.

Columbia City is an urban, turn-of-the-century neighborhood known as a culturally rich area with eclectic galleries, unique theatres, renowned restaurants, an award-winning farmers market, festivals and artisan bakeries. The Columbia 26 homes are nestled at 5006 Renton Ave. S, just four blocks away from the heart of Columbia City, a short walk from the Central Link light rail and around the corner from key bus lines.

We expect a lot of inquiries about these homes, so let us know soon if you or someone you know wants to learn more! The first 12 homes will be available in April, and we plan to make 14 more available in the fall. Visit our website at Columbia26.com to see floor plans, pictures, learn about income requirements and to set up a showing. To learn more about the homes and various financing and down-payment assistance options, contact Garbo Grossman, at 206-323-1227 ext. 116.

When you live just four blocks away, it’ll be hard not to do your shopping at Columbia City’s Farmers Market—open May through October.

Kids and adults will enjoy Columbia City’s numerous events and activities—from artisan bars and cafes to the annual Rainier Valley Heritage Parade.
A Warm Gathering on a Winter’s Night

On a rainy evening in early January, nearly 100 Homestead homeowners and supporters gathered at the Southside Commons in Columbia City to eat, drink and be merry. We did some coloring and signed postcards to send to Olympia in support of the Housing Trust Fund. We also elected new board members and would like to welcome and congratulate new Homestead board members, Celeste Denson and Trinidad Jacinto.

In addition to creating affordable homes that stay affordable for future generations, Homestead is in the community building business, facilitating opportunities for Homestead homeowners and supporters to get to know each other. Thanks for joining us at our annual celebration. Keep an eye out for an invitation to our summer picnic.

From the Director

Stronger together. This theme runs throughout this newsletter, and all of Homestead’s work. Thanks to the strengths our partners bring to us—and we to them—we increase our impact around Seattle. We’ve done more work on a distressed property in White Center while providing an opportunity for youth to build job skills with YouthBuild (see page 4). Other partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, Rebuilding Together and Community Frameworks’ Self Help Opportunity Program combine our homebuyers’ sweat equity with increased Homestead project funding. Once homeowners get into their homes, our partnership with the City of Seattle’s Homewise program implements energy efficiency improvements, lowering the cost of living. And of course, our Columbia 26 project wouldn’t be happening without a dizzying array of partnerships.

Homestead is also looking beyond our construction sites and traditional allies to make Seattle a stronger city. We hope to partner with for-profit, market-rate developers in our quest to provide affordable housing options for low- and middle-income households of all sizes. But getting to that point is not easy.

For the past several years, Homestead and a coalition of partners have been working to strengthen the city’s Incentive Zoning law. There’s an opportunity this year to make large strides toward ensuring enough housing that is affordable to Seattle’s workforce will be built by market-rate developers. But we need your support to help make this a reality.

The Seattle City Council is now gathering information on how best to meet affordable housing needs. In the coming months we’ll need your help to advocate for a better ordinance that meaningfully incentivizes developers to include affordable homes in their projects. Homestead has long been a strong advocate for these policies, but to be successful, we will need your voice too. We’ll keep you up to date on how you can help make new development more equitable.

Standing stronger together for smart public policy, we create opportunity for all in our wealthy, beautiful city.

—Sheldon Cooper, Executive Director

Volunteers and supporters Bang Nguyen (center) and Stephanie Velasco (right) chat while other attendees load their plates with dinner donated by Tutta Bella.

Homeowners Erin Katz (left) and Siobhan Ring (second from right) pose with board members Rachael Myers (second from left) and Amanda Licorish (right).
Almost Home after Hard Work with Homestead

Megan and David Garcia are talking excitedly about the house they just toured when a car pulls up to the curb next to them.

“They’re doing great work there!” the neighbor shouts through her car window. She’s describing how Homestead is turning the once-bedraggled house—it had birds living in it!—into a great family home. “It will get a new roof, new windows, new siding, new everything,” she says.

It feels like a sign to Megan and David; this house is perfect for them and their kids. It has friendly neighbors, is close to David’s work in Seattle and is in the type of safe, quiet neighborhood they want for their family. Even better, thanks to Homestead, this might finally be a house they can afford to buy.

Buying a home has been an elusive dream for the Garcias. With just one income to support David, Megan, 4-year-old Lex, and 2-year-old Lucy, it’s just been too expensive. Then they saw the house they were pretty sure they’d qualify to buy through Homestead. As their application was processed, they got an unwelcome surprise: their credit wasn’t quite up to snuff. Megan and David knew their credit wasn’t perfect, but they took care of the big problems years ago. When they learned old problems were still preventing them from getting a mortgage, David grew frustrated. He wondered what they could be doing wrong.

They turned to Lindsey and Garbo in Homestead’s Homeownership Department to find out what they needed to do. After a talk, the Garcias discovered that fixing their credit isn’t just about paying debts; it means tough ongoing negotiations with lenders and collectors. Because they really want this home for their family, they got right to work calling and emailing, sending letters and paying bills. Through it all, they’ve been leaning on Garbo and Lindsey for support and advice, but doing all the legwork themselves. It’s hard, especially now when they’ve done all they can and still have to wait a little longer to make sure everything checks out. But they’re already picturing the house as the home their kids will grow up in.

“The minute we get the keys and close the door behind us, it’ll all be worth it,” says Megan.

Welcome Theresa

Homestead is very excited to announce the arrival of its newest staff member, Theresa Strachila, who will be filling the role of Staff Assistant!

Theresa is eager to put her administrative experience to work in Seattle supporting Homestead’s equitable community development work. Originally from Mt. Vernon, Washington, Theresa comes to Homestead from Boston, where she worked as support staff at the Boston Foundation and at LIft-Roxbury where she helped low-income families secure housing, employment and public benefits. Theresa has a strong commitment to economic and racial justice. In her free time she likes to hike, travel and cook vegetarian food. Come to one of our scheduled Meet Homestead events to get reacquainted with the current work of Homestead and to meet Theresa. See our website for upcoming dates.

“Affordable homeownership opportunities are particularly important for creating long-term stability for families and neighborhoods.”

—Theresa Strachila
Staff Assistant
Homestead Launches New Partnership with YouthBuild

They tear down a wall. They rip up a floor. You might think this group of young adults is up to no good, but they’re actually receiving construction training and applying their new skills to renovate a one-bedroom home in White Center that will eventually be sold to a Homestead homebuyer. This is Homestead’s new partnership with YouthCare’s YouthBuild, a construction education and employment opportunity for 18-24 year-olds that combines job readiness, leadership development and professional development with Pre-Apprenticeship Construction education and training.

“Youth have the opportunity to build their lives in ways they never expected by building a career they never dared to dream of by building homes for people in need in their neighborhoods,” says YouthBuild Program Manager Jon Bersche.

At the same time, they have the chance to leave a legacy of a more stable neighborhood and a stronger community because they are working on homes destined for permanent affordability. Their work, along with numerous funders, helps keep the prices of Homestead’s homes affordable, attracting diverse, long-term residents to neighborhoods in and around Seattle. That’s a win for youth, homeowners and communities.

“YouthCare is thrilled to partner with Homestead to give our young people a chance to put their skills to work in the community, refurbishing high-quality affordable homes.”

—MELINDA GIOVENGO, PHD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
YOUTHCARE

YouthBuild participants Terrence, Jacob, DeNoris, Esequiel, Pavel, and Shawn after a long day of training and renovation at a Homestead house in White Center.