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Peninsula Community Health's Kathryn Foley, left, and Regina Bonnie Rogers exit the porch of the Cedar House in downtown Bremerton as they make their way around the home to the entrance to the downstairs apartment during an open house on Wednesday.

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## Housing and healthcare find room together at PCHS' new Cedar House in Bremerton

**KAI UYEHARA** Kitsap Sun

An old yellow home framed by large cedar trees in downtown Bremerton filled with people Wednesday. Built in 1917, it's easy to see a time when the house was part of a thriving residential neighborhood. Now it sits as the block's last vestige of single-family homes moved over the decades to make room for a city parking garage and small apartment complex, with a view across the street of the Norm Dicks Government Center and what's left of a site demolished for future development and the crumbling former Eagles Lodge.

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story home will serve as Peninsula Community Health Services' first step into the volatile world of affordable housing.

“Housing is healthcare and I think we're going to see how that plays out,” said PCHS CEO Jennifer Kreidler-Moss.

PCHS has served as a community health clinic in downtown Bremerton since 1987, with its site near Sixth Street and Pacific Avenue now providing primary medical, dental, behavioral health counseling, substance use treatment and more for patients, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay.

Housing wasn't part of the organization's story until recently, when PCHS bought the property at Fifth Street house in February 2023.

The building, dubbed the Cedar House, cost \$515,000 to purchase, then PCHS put an additional \$150,000 toward improvements that separated the building into two units, Kreidler-Moss said. PCHS received \$112,000 in the state capital budget for the improvements, but footed the rest of the bill itself.

The Cedar House will serve as permanently affordable housing for at least ten years, in accordance with the state grant conditions. PCHS's intention is to house individuals who are facing health and behavioral health issues along with housing instability – a generally underserved population.

“Safe permanent housing is imperative to treatment in many cases and if individuals don't have a safe home, they can't complete their treatment properly,” Daniel Michaels, PCHS's new housing coordinator, said. Permanent supportive housing “helps bridge that (gap) by integrating case management with housing with the goal of breaking a cycle of homelessness and health issues.”

When an individual is facing housing insecurity, it can influence their health struggles, Kreidler-Moss said. Medications can be damaged, lost or stolen, misused or sold, and patients may have a hard time finding dry, sanitary and safe places to stay and heal. Payment and work can also be a huge hurdle for

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with the Bremerton Housing Authority who will set the rental rate, Michaels said. The rate tenants pay will be a percentage of what the rent is set at.

When PCHS screens its patients every two years for things in their life that affect their healthcare, “what we find is the number one need they identify is housing, because a lot of times...if they have medical needs, it's so much harder for them to find places to rent.” Kreidler-Moss said. “If you can't help, you kind of feel like you're not really empowered or helpful as a provider... it sucks when it's not something you can fix.”

Until now, PCHS had only been able to help its patients with housing by connecting them to other agencies like the BHA or Housing Kitsap, Kreidler-Moss said.

“We know that there's still more need than there is available housing, especially in the low income space,” Kreidler-Moss said.

The Cedar House layout will also help PCHS assist a unique population due to its size. The four bedrooms and two baths in the upper unit could house a large family, while the downstairs unit features a slightly smaller capacity with three bedrooms and one bath, Kreidler-Moss said. But, the housing can be for anyone facing homelessness, whether those are individuals living in cars, hopping couches, living in public housing, at work and more.

The tenants are not required to be patients of PCHS, but they will be referred to the home via Kitsap County’s coordinated entry system which prioritizes the most vulnerable, Kreidler-Moss said. Whoever lives in the Cedar House however, will have access to PCHS case management that can range from outreach to their doorstep, mobile clinic units in their driveway, or a short walk to a PCHS clinic.

“We're going to be really mindful to watch how it works,” Kreidler-Moss said. “If we do see that their lives do become better in some ways, I think it will kind of propel (PCHS) to look with its board and decide if it wants to do more projects like this in the future.”

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appointments, school attendance for possible children and employment.

“Hopefully it all works,” Kreidler-Moss said.

PCHS is beginning to lean in. Michaels’ role as housing coordinator is new to the healthcare organization. They even have loose plans for another housing project called the Hemlock House, on Sixth Street just west of Park Avenue, where PCHS has bought a dilapidated building and hopes to replace it with 52 units of housing when funding is available. The organization is also looking forward to [opening a residential project on Lower Wheaton Way in Bremerton](#), aimed at opening workforce housing for its own employees.

“We are excited to enter this field to try and address some major issues that are plaguing our community,” Michaels said.

PCHS aims to move tenants into the Cedar House during the end of April.



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