

## Opinion

### Trent Fluegel: First Homes vows to keep moving forward

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#### Post-Bulletin

Rochester has a history of innovative response to community needs. The most vibrant of these responses have come about as a result of the collaborative efforts of groups with diverse skills, and often times divergent interests, that were put aside for the good of the community.

A tornado in 1883 led to a partnership between the Sisters of St. Francis and W.W. Mayo, which produced what would become a world-class medical facility. Similarly, after the flood of 1978, the community came together to build a flood control project that has prevented repeated devastation.

In 1999, community leaders recognized another critical issue that needed a creative response. As most businesses were flourishing, employers were finding it difficult to attract and retain their workers. A significant shortage of housing options was deterring current and potential workers from remaining in or relocating to our community.

Once again, the community, led by the Rochester Area Foundation, united to create a solution. More than \$14 million in local contributions was raised to fund a solution, which, in turn, leveraged more than \$100 million in outside resources.

First Homes was born with a goal of creating 875 starter homes for working families. This week marks the achievement of that initial goal -- 875 homes have been created in the seven years since the First Homes initiative was launched.

But the significance of First Homes' efforts will last for many years to come. Unlike traditional housing assistance, many of First Homes' houses are placed in a Community Land Trust (CLT) which ensures that each house remains affordable for generations into the future. First Homes' innovative use of this model has earned state and national recognition.

On Monday, First Homes dedicated its 875th home in celebration of a community-wide achievement. Without the generosity of more than 100 local donors, and the hard work of builders, banks, laborers, lenders, realtors, and local government officials, First Homes could not have built even a single home.

Moving forward, First Homes will continue working to ensure that our work force has a stable, high-quality supply of housing dispersed throughout the Rochester area.

In the tradition of Rochester's response to serious community needs, First Homes will continue to focus collaborative leadership and vision on the issues of housing and community development.

This community has shown time and again its willingness to join together to address challenges with vision, generosity, and hard work. Thank you for your support of First Homes and the trust you have placed in us; together we have achieved a remarkable accomplishment. We should all take pride in this achievement.

**Trent Fluegel is chair of the First Homes Board of Directors.**