

**\*\*\*FOR RELEASE\*\*\***

**5/9/23**

**Raise-Op Celebrates Grand Opening for New Affordable Low-Energy Homes  
and Makes Building Designs Available to Public**

**Where:** 198 Blake Street, Lewiston

**When:** 4:30pm Tuesday, May 9th, 2023

**Key Words:** Affordable Housing, Sustainable Development, Passive House

**Contact:** Craig Saddlemire, Development Organizer, (207) 200-1596, [craigs@raiseop.com](mailto:craigs@raiseop.com)



**Summary:** Raise-Op ([www.raiseop.com](http://www.raiseop.com)) celebrates the creation of 18 new affordable homes in the Tree Street Neighborhood of Lewiston, ME. Apartment buildings are constructed to certified passive house standards, an extremely high standard for energy efficiency and air quality. Raise-Op is making building designs available on their website to promote more sustainable and affordable housing development.

**Project Partners Include:**

- Raise-Op, Developer, Project Sponsor, Resident Services
- Evernorth, Syndicator
- MaineHousing, Financing
- Hebert Construction, Construction Manager
- Bild Architecture, Design
- Lewiston Housing, Property Manager
- Community Concepts Inc.
- City of Lewiston

**Narrative and Speaker Comments:**

The Raise-Op, a local housing organization led by its residents since 2008, cut the ribbon on two new buildings today. Consisting of 9 units each, these developments are filling in vacant lots in the Tree Street Neighborhood at 198 Blake Street and 84 Walnut Street.

“We are very proud of this building design,” explained Shaad Masood, President of the Raise-Op Housing Cooperative, which developed the new buildings. “This design began with leadership from our own residents, who envisioned the sustainable, durable, and beautiful homes that we are celebrating today. We want to share this design with the public so that others are inspired to develop their own sustainable homes and make our cities and towns more enjoyable for people of all incomes.” The Raise-Op has launched a webpage where the public can learn more about the development, download building floorplans, and even request access to the detailed architectural drawings. To access this information, the public can visit [raiseop.com/passivehouse](https://raiseop.com/passivehouse). “This can help lower some of the pre-development costs for others wishing to develop similar buildings. The housing crisis and the climate crisis affect us all, and we want to support the widespread creation of more affordable and low-energy homes as much as possible. Sharing information is important to achieve that.”

“Passive House buildings use only 1/3 the energy, per square foot, of the average home in Maine,” explained Evan Carroll, the principal architect of the new building. Passive House is a rigorous design standard that requires highly efficient energy systems, as well as very high air quality, in order to meet the certification. This is the first certified passive house building in all of Androscoggin County and the 15th certified passive house apartment building in all of Maine, according to [passivhaus Maine](https://passivhausmaine.com). “With passive house design principles, you have both a very tight building envelope, as well as energy recovery ventilation so that each apartment has its own supply of fresh air all day long, no matter the season. This insulation also helps provide more safety and comfort for residents in terms of sound insulation, odor and pest reduction, and added fire safety.”

The building includes solar panels on the roof that generate approximately 50% of the building’s energy needs over the course of the year. All of these design elements help to reduce the carbon footprint of the building, as well as lower the operating costs to keep the homes affordable for the residents, who must be low-income to qualify for the units. Maine also has 21 school and university buildings and dozens of single family homes that are Passive House certified. As of 2021, there were roughly 2,000 Passive House projects certified nation-wide.

“From a design standpoint, the building is very replicable because it can fit in a lot of places,” said Craig Saddle mire, Development Organizer for the Raise-Op. “We’ve already demonstrated that with the second building at 84 Walnut, that is almost identical to this building. In Lewiston, this building should fit onto any standard lot in the Downtown Residential Neighborhood, and be able to meet all of the zoning and code requirements.” 198 Blake is the first building to meet the new design district overlay requirements, which require a higher visual standards for new developments. “We wanted to make a building that feels familiar to our residents and neighbors. We wanted it to feel like home. And we wanted it to be beautiful. It’s the classic New England Triple Decker style, but with some modern upgrades. I think it fits in with the other buildings really well.”

One of the most noticeable features of the new building is the solar awnings which hang over the top of each window facing the street. “The size and orientation of the awnings are part of the building’s energy model,” says Carroll. “During the summer, when the sun is high in the sky, these awnings will block most of the direct sunlight, reducing the thermal loading that would otherwise take place. This means the units are much easier to keep cool in the summer. But the spacing of the slats will still allow for diffuse light to enter the window, so you’re getting nice summer sunlight without overheating. And in the wintertime, the sun is lower in the sky, so the building can benefit from that direct thermal gain during the colder months.”

“Being a passive house project, this project brings efficiency to a whole new level,” explained Tim Mancine, the Construction Manager for Hebert who oversaw the construction of the buildings. “The buildings require a high level of attention to detail when it comes to air sealing with every possible gap, crack, and open space sealed. It’s the tightest building envelope I’ve ever seen constructed. Our blower door tests showed almost no air leakage out of the building. This means that the mechanical ventilation for each unit is controlling all of the fresh air being brought into the building, which prevents energy loss and also ensures high air quality all day long. The insulation design achieves R-values well above code and standard building practices to maximize the performance of the heating and cooling systems.”

The development is the result of an investment partnership between the Raise-Op and Evernorth, a regional syndicator of affordable housing, with financing from MaineHousing. Lewiston Housing will provide property management services, and Raise-Op staff will provide the resident services. The development includes 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, and 4 bedroom apartments, all restricted to low-income households at or below 60% Area Median Income (AMI). The rent levels are also restricted to remain affordable to residents, and includes off-street vehicle and bicycle parking, heating and cooling, backyard greenspace, washer dryers supplied in each unit, and a community room.

“Building community and working cooperatively with our neighbors can help us all to feel more invested in the place we call home,” said Shannon Fuller, Resident Organizer for the Raise-Op, as she addressed the audience and future residents of 198 Blake. “We’re so happy to be introducing these new homes to the city and to be welcoming new residents. This is an exciting time to be part of Lewiston’s vibrant and diverse Tree Streets neighborhood. As you walk through this beautiful building today, think about the community *you* most want to be part of and how you can work with your neighbors to build that.”

Houssein Abdi is a former resident of the Raise-Op where he raised his family for 7 years before buying his first house. “I was a renter for many years before I moved into the Raise-Op. Once I joined the Raise-Op, I was able to see what it’s like when residents get to have input on decisions that affect their homes. I served on the board of directors, and also served in the finance role for my building. While living at the Raise-Op, as my family grew and we needed more space, I knew I could never go back to just being a renter again. Because our rent was so affordable, we were able to save enough money to buy our own home, which we did last year. So now I’m a homeowner, but I will always consider myself a part of Raise-Op. I’m glad that Raise-Op is growing and providing good homes to more people.”

\*\*\*End Release\*\*\*