For Immediate Release

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A Vibrant New Chapter for Brickworks

The San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild (Ag Guild) is pleased to announce the signing of a letter of intent to transfer ownership of the Brickworks property in Friday Harbor to Alchemy Art Center (Alchemy). Alchemy is a San Juan Island nonprofit with a growing focus on local agriculture and long-standing experience in producing community gatherings and events.

Located at 150 Nichols Street in Friday Harbor, the Brickworks building and plaza is a community favorite and home to the San Juan Island Farmers Market and San Juan Islands Food Hub. Execution of a full purchase and sale agreement and transfer of ownership is expected to occur by the end of the year. The Ag Guild will not receive any funds or profit in any way from the transfer of Brickworks to Alchemy.

Background

In December 2025, the Ag Guild began a deep dive into the heart of Brickworks operations and programs. The historical building in the heart of Friday Harbor is central to the Ag Guild's origin story, and over the last 15 years has become a staple in the community, most importantly as a home for the Farmers Market and the Food Hub. The responsibility to ensure the building prospers and benefits the community to its fullest potential is one the Ag Guild holds with much care.

The Ag Guild's Brickworks Transition Committee (Committee) spent months asking questions and seeking feedback from former board members, former staff, and community stakeholders, assessing what Brickworks needs to thrive and how the Ag Guild's own evolution has impacted that. The Ag Guild has grown steadily over the past 15 years, expanding its programs throughout the county and broadening the representation of other islands on its board. As those important programs demanded more energy and skills, it became more difficult to maintain the very local focus and specific set of facility-related skills needed for Brickworks. The board came to the difficult decision that both the San Juan Island (SJI) community and the farmers in San Juan County would be best served if a local, SJI-based nonprofit were to take on the stewardship of Brickworks.

With open hearts and best intentions for Brickworks and the community, the Ag Guild started engaging SJI-based nonprofits with commitments to community and agricultural

support to humbly ask if there is a group better poised to steward Brickworks into the future. The Committee met with five groups who came forward with interest in further discussion. In these meetings they dug into mission alignment, long term viability, vision and financials. The Ag Guild was clear, for example, that the Farmers Market and Food Hub leases needed to be protected into the future, and that it was vital that the building remain a community asset and offer space for ag-related gatherings and efforts.

After dozens of hours of meetings, both internally and with donors and community members, the Ag Guild is extremely pleased to share that an exciting new chapter for Brickworks is being written with the selection of Alchemy as the next community steward of Brickworks.

“We are optimistic about this transition of ownership of the Brickworks Building to Alchemy Arts Center. The Brickworks building will remain the home of the Friday Harbor Farmer’s Market and the San Juan Islands Food Hub. Kitchen, event, and meeting rentals will continue. But there will be new and exciting life brought to the building thanks to the passion and vision of Alchemy Arts Center,” said Lauren Bigelow, Executive Director of the Ag Guild, which owns the Brickworks building. “During the search for a new steward and owner for the Brickworks building, it was essential to our board and to myself, that we found a partner in deep alignment with community priorities and with exceptional experience managing projects and property, capable staff, a strong financial status and with notable commitment to ag-related activities and programs. And, equally important, that the community and donors understand the reason for the transition and also feel optimistic about what this means for Brickworks.”

Maria Michaelson, Executive Director of Alchemy Art Center said, “We are humbled, excited, and honored to have the opportunity to steward this incredible community space in the years to come. We are eager to begin planning the next steps, and we hope people will reach out and share their ideas with us. We want to listen to the community and work together to foster a sense of belonging and help this place thrive. Brickworks has been built and cared for by so many dedicated volunteers over the years. We recognize the incredible legacy of the people who have worked so hard to create this resource, and we intend to honor that legacy as we look toward its future.”

Next steps include due diligence, title transfer and other administrative tasks. In addition, the Alchemy Art Center is making plans to engage community members in dialog about future uses of the building, the stage and the plaza, to benefit the community.

Pete Kilpatrick, San Juan Island resident, who has been instrumental in the renovation and development of Brickworks has been an important voice in this process, “I have put

heart and soul into all my work at Brickworks, so am deeply interested in this path to a potential new owner. I took this potential opportunity to Maria and Andrea at Alchemy a couple of months ago. When I asked them if they might be interested, Maria's immediate response was "Hell yes"! I've been working as a volunteer developing artist housing at Alchemy, and have been so impressed on how quickly they have expanded their organization, and their management skills. They have the staff and energy needed to boost Brickworks to the next level as a community center. …If Alchemy is accepted, I'll be working with them closely."

The anticipated timeline calls for completing the change in ownership in December, 2026, after the annual Old Fashioned Holiday Market coming up on December 11-13.

During the time the Ag Guild has owned the building, it has helped upgrade the facility. San Juan island community members raised funds to build a stage and pave a plaza specially designed as a home for farmers to sell their products. The Ag Guild has hosted meetings with farmers, offered ag-related training sessions and conferences, and has rented the building for community events, private parties and weddings. With deep gratitude, the Ag Guild acknowledges the community volunteers, donors, former board members and staff who gave so much to Brickworks becoming what it is today.

After transferring ownership of Brickworks, the Ag Guild will have increased capacity to focus energy on its core farmer services and support to aspiring farmers and producers, such as the FARM Fund. For more information about programs of the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild, see their website: https://sjiagguild.com/

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