

Housing Partnership will turn foreclosures into new opportunities Rochester neighborhood chosen for aid

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PORTSMOUTH — The Housing Partnership is seeking to aid a Seacoast city hit hard by foreclosures and assist more first-time homebuyers.

At the invitation of the Community Development Finance Authority, The Housing Partnership submitted a proposal to purchase and rehabilitate properties in a Rochester neighborhood with a high number of foreclosures. Utilizing Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds, the partnership will work with the city to identify, restore and rehabilitate foreclosed properties for eventual sale to first-time homebuyers. Work is expected to begin this summer.

"The Housing Partnership is back in the development business," said Jeff Gilbert, the partnership's board president, referring to a 41-unit affordable housing development under construction in Kennebunk, Maine, its first development in several years.

Gilbert cited the partnership's new executive director Marty Chapman for his success in his former role as director of real estate for advancing its housing development mission and creating projects, including those in Rochester and Rye.

Kathy Bogle Shields, executive director of New Hampshire CDFA, spoke as keynote speaker at The Housing Partnership's annual gathering at the Sheraton Harborside Hotel earlier this month. She discussed the persistent need for affordable housing on the Seacoast.

The partnership's annual meeting included awards. Melvin Low of Rye received the Community Catalyst Award; Richard Burbine accepted the Make a Difference Donor Award for Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage; Kathy Bogle Shields received the Partnership Award for NHCDFa; the Pro Bono Publico Award went to Drummond Woodsum & MacMahon of Portland Maine; Resident of the Year Award went to Joel Thibeau, Kelly Collins and their children, Emily and Tyler; Volunteer of the Year Award was Dennis Williams of HouseMaster Home Inspections for his work with the agency's first-time home buyer education program. Members of the agency's Capitol Steps event committee, Bill Cormier, Matthew Madeira, Carol McClard and Midge Nelson received Special Recognition Awards.