

# LOCAL & STATE

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## GREEN AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### New apartments giving economy 'shot in the arm'

The 53 Danforth project is the result of a deal involving the city, the YWCA and the Portland Museum of Art.

By **TIM DEVANEY**  
Staff Writer

**P**ortland — A \$5.4 million apartment building in downtown Portland will open Saturday, giving the city an environmentally friendly complex that also enlarges the supply of affordable housing.

The project, 53 Danforth, sports a digital carbon counter in the lobby that reports the amount of carbon not being pumped into the environment because of the building's green features.

The building boasts a 21-panel solar display that could save at least \$4,500 a year in natural gas. Other highlights include hall lights that turn off after one minute without motion and low-flow shower heads that save water.

"It's the direction we have to go if we're going to survive as a human species," co-developer Nathan Szanton said. "The way we build buildings traditionally is not a sustainable model."

The strong green emphasis grew out of the developers' personal lifestyles.

"I try to live a green life," said co-developer Bobby Monks. "Green is the future."

Gov. John Baldacci spoke at a ceremony for the building on Wednesday, saying the project will generate "energy enthusiasm" in Portland.

The building at 53 Danforth St. will help make Portland the "most livable city in America," Mayor Jill Duson said. "It will help this burgeoning city realize its potential."



Photos by John Ewing/Staff Photographer

**Co-developer Nathan Szanton** explains the benefits of solar panels Wednesday at 53 Danforth, a new apartment building on Danforth Street in Portland.

The 43-unit building will offer 30 affordable-housing units to lower-income tenants.

Szanton said he wanted to provide a way for native Portlanders to stay in the area.

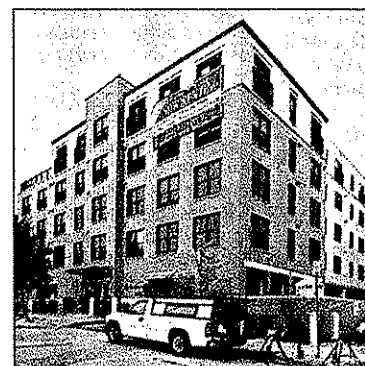
"One of the problems we have in coastal Maine is it's such a desirable place to live that lower-income people get bid out of the market for housing," he said. "It really makes me feel good to offer affordable living to local people."

Jay Kovensky, who has used a wheelchair for 16 years, said he was excited to find a "comfortable" apartment building with a roll-in shower and lowered counters and closets.

"It's really hard to find accessible housing in Portland," he said.

For others, it's a chance to start over.

After several recent life-changing events, Pattie MacDougall said she will feel safe in her new home.



The \$5.4 million 43-unit building at 53 Danforth St. will offer 30 apartments to lower-income tenants. It officially opens Saturday.

Please see **GREEN**, Page B10

# GREEN

Continued from Page B1

"It's so, so uplifting. I'm so thankful for this opportunity," she said. "I'm just looking forward to calling this home. I really am."

The building went up on a vacant lot that detracted from an otherwise nice street, Szanton said.

"Every single household that lives in that building is like a little economic engine driving the local economy forward," Szanton said. "It's a shot in the arm for the economy of downtown Portland."

The developers, who do business as Maine Workforce Housing, built 53 Danforth as part of a complex deal involving the city, the YWCA and the Portland Museum of Art, to help provide affordable rental space to compensate for the closing of the old YWCA building on Spring Street.

The museum purchased the YWCA building, which provided



John Ewing/Staff Photographer

**Pattie MacDougall will rent an apartment at 53 Danforth in Portland.** "It's so, so uplifting. I'm so thankful for this opportunity," she said. "I'm just looking forward to calling this home."

housing for homeless and low-income women, and contributed \$900,000 toward the Danforth Street project.

The Maine Housing Authority also provided about \$2 million in subsidies to support the project.

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