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New affordable housing touted as 'aesthetic upgrade'

By **DAVID CARRHUFF**
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A waitress, a Shaw's supermarket clerk and a freelance production artist plan to move into Portland's newest apartments, according to one of the developers, who christened the environmentally friendly affordable housing complex at 53 Danforth St. Wednesday.

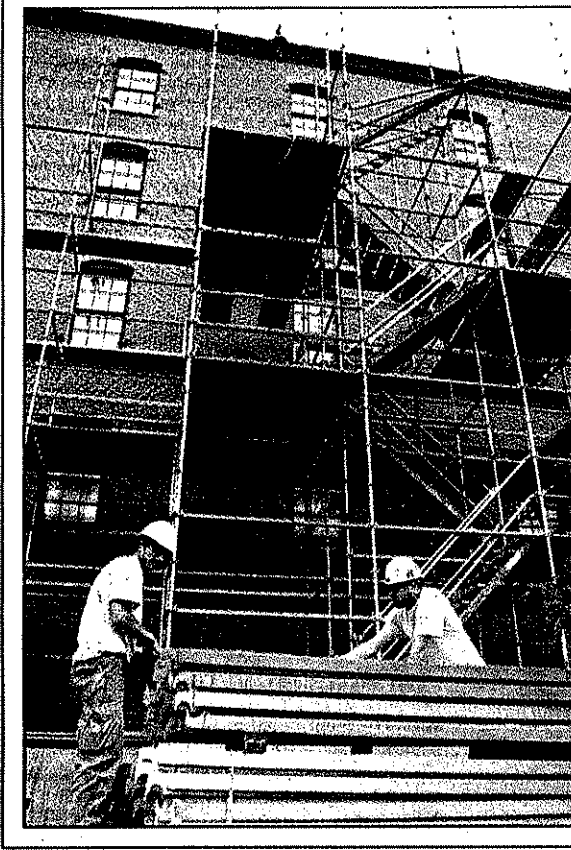
Nathan Szanton was joined by Gov.

John Baldacci, U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree, Portland Mayor Jill Duson and about 100 onlookers at the apartments, where Szanton said the diversity of residents is one of the strengths. A manager at LL Bean's, a graduate student at University of Southern Maine and "a physically handicapped person who is retired" also plan to live there, he said.

"It will add to Portland's vitality to have

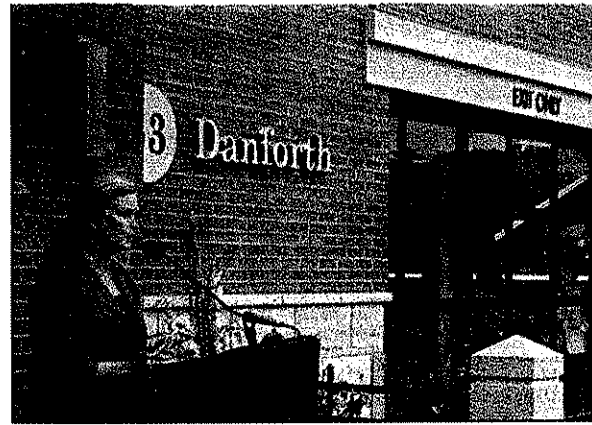
a building here that has 60 new residents where no one lived here before, residents who will be walking the streets, using the

see **HOUSING** page 8



Mortar rehab

David Lavigne (left) and Anthony Cropley with Seacoast Scaffolding of South Portland help dismantle a 70-foot-high scaffold at the Baxter Place Building on Commercial Street Wednesday. Cimino Construction of Scarborough repointed the brick exterior, replacing mortar on the historic 1859 building. (DAVID CARHUUFF PHOTO)



a grand opening of 53 Danforth Wednesday, an affordable and workforce housing apartment building in downtown Portland, U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree talks about the value of "green" building. (DAVID CARHUUFF PHOTO)

Affordable housing celebrated

HOUSING from page one parks, the schools, shopping in the shops, eating in the restaurants and making Portland a more vital place," said Szanton, who developed the apartment complex with partner, Bobby Monks. Thirty of 43 units are set aside for households earning less than 60 percent of the area median income; the remaining 13 units are

offered at market rates. The apartments replace a one-story building and gravel parking lot, Szanton noted.

"We think we've made an aesthetic upgrade to the neighborhood," he said of the \$5.4 million development.

The 43-unit apartment building features a solar thermal hot water heater, automatic hall lights that will turn off after 1 minute with no motion, super-insulated walls and roof, and new low-flow showerheads that use significantly less water than traditional showerheads, the developers announced.

"The real estate industry has to be moving toward more environmentally sustainable buildings because 40 percent of all energy that we use as a society is used in our buildings," Szanton said.

The Maine State Housing Authority provided a significant portion of the financing for the apartments, including a \$2 million tax credit, \$1.65 million subsidy and \$3 million loan, the governor's office noted.

The developers reached a deal with the city of Portland, the

YWCA and the Portland Museum of Art, allowing the museum to acquire the YWCA property next door and then place \$900,000 in escrow with the Maine State Housing Authority to be used for providing replacement affordable housing on the Peninsula, according to the developers. Maine State Housing Authority then committed an additional \$4.57 million of financing toward the project.

The city and TD Bank also provided financing for the project.

Baldacci welcomed the 53 Danforth St. building, as well as an unrelated construction job across the street, where builders were readying a building for a new bakery.

"As governor, I love the sounds, the noises I'm hearing, the builders building and the workers working, and people in this community and around the state working to get us out of this recession," Baldacci said.

The apartments at 53 Danforth St. were designed by Archetype Architects, P.A. and were built by Wright-Ryan Construction, both of Portland. Residents are expected to move in this weekend.



Monks