



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Collaborators, Officials, Residents and Neighborhood Celebrate Opening of Senior-Citizen Housing Development

Lewiston, MAINE (February 25, 2010) – More than 100 community members, officials and residents came out this morning to celebrate the completion of the Birch Hill Senior Housing Project that has created affordable homes on what had been a long-vacant property

The event at the corner of Birch and Knox streets in Lewiston featured speakers from the collaborating partners of the project who spoke on the importance of affordable senior housing in Maine, the various challenges that the project faced and the successful collaboration of local and state organizations. Facility tours were given and refreshments were provided by Willie Bean's.

"Birch Hill is one of those projects that has truly had a positive impact on the community. These economic times are unprecedented, and capital is the difference between a project like Birch Hill coming to fruition or simply being a plan on the shelf. That is why we believe it is imperative for those of us who can, to work together to continue to invest in our future," said Jim Delamater, President and CEO of Northeast Bank.

"The real story of Birch Hill is in how it got created. It is a story of collaboration and leadership. It involved collaboration of many key partners and it is a story of leadership as each partner had to exert their individual leadership to create the development. Hopefully, we will see more projects like this over the coming year and we are thankful that this development came to fruition for the residents and the community," said Richard Berman of Developers Collaborative.

Also featured at Thursday's event was Lucy Ottati, a new resident of the Birch Hill Apartments. She shared her gratitude and excitement about her new home.

"It's a joy to wake up every day in a place surrounded by activity. To look outside my apartment and see kids getting off the school bus and having people around really makes me feel part of a community, and I'm just honored to be living here."

Local and state officials were also present, including representatives from Senator Olympia Snowe's and Congressmen Michael Michaud's offices. Mayor Larry Gilbert of Lewiston spoke about the project being a part of Lewiston's revitalization and the city's goals for the future.

"The City of Lewiston continues to seek out and embrace opportunities to grow and develop through worthwhile projects like this one, even amidst the struggles of the current economy. . . We will continue to invest and reach out to our partners to do what needs to be done to meet the needs of our community and our residents."

Gov. John E. Baldacci attended the event as the keynote speaker. He congratulated the partners of the project on their success and also spoke on the importance of collaborative development in the state.

The Birch Hill Senior Housing project has created 20 units of simple yet elegant affordable elderly rental housing in a new building in downtown Lewiston. The unit mix includes 17 one-bedroom units and 3 two-bedroom units, with 5 units to be fully handicapped accessible. All 20 of these units will be targeted to households aged 55 or older with incomes at or below 60% of Area Median Income (AMI). Wireless broadband access is built in to the facility and a computer is available in the community room for residents. The building also has a laundry room available to residents.

The Birch Hill Senior Housing project started construction a year ago on a 15 year vacant lot in the heart of Lewiston's downtown. Its completion was made possible through a public-private partnership between the City of Lewiston, Lewiston Housing Authority, Maine State Housing Authority, Coastal Enterprises Inc., Northern New England Housing Investment Fund, Benchmark Construction, Developers Collaborative and Northeast Bank.

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Pitch:

In celebration of the completed Birch Hill Senior Housing Apartments, over 100 community members and officials came together for a ribbon cutting ceremony this morning in Lewiston including Governor John E. Baldacci and new Birch Hill resident Lucy Ottati. Below is a press release about the event with speaker quotes and project background, and attached is a photo of the ribbon cutting. We appreciate any coverage you can provide and if you have any questions or would like any additional photos, please feel free to contact me.

Photo from left to right: Jim Delamater, Northeast Bank; Ron Philips, Coastal Enterprises; Margaret Bean, Maine Housing (behind); Lucie Ottati, Birch Hill Resident; Kevin Reilley, Benchmark Construction (behind); Governor John E. Baldacci; Richard Berman, Development Collaborative; Mayor Laurent Gilbert, City of Lewiston.