

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2013

www.eagletimes.com

VOL. 99 No. 81 50¢

Community Development Week: A look at Claremont

By **DAMIEN FISHER**
Staff Writer

CLAREMONT — From the Sugar River Mills housing project, to Red River's offices, the city has benefited greatly from state and federal community development funding.

"Claremont can and will be doing great things," said Mayor Jim Neilsen.

This is part of the National Community Development Week, highlighting the gains made through community development funding for projects in the state.

Holding a reception at the Sugar River Mills yesterday, officials with the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority met with city representatives and members of the public to discuss the importance of funding.

"It helps makes New Hampshire one of the most livable states in the nation," said Ted Kuchinski, the chief financial officer of the CDFA.

The Sugar River Mills on Heritage

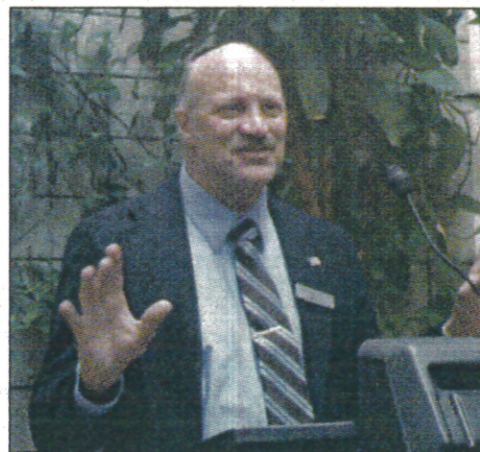
Drive has seen its share of community development funding, with a renovation project started in 2010 to upgrade the energy efficiency of the building. The Sugar River Mills has 111 housing units of affordable housing in the heart of the city.

Kuchinski said without the building, the many residents would be scattered throughout the area and would not have the community contained in Sugar River Mills.

The projects that are funded through community development grants can range from affordable housing and business expansion, to childcare, as in the case of Green Mountain Children's Center, Neilsen said.

"It's helping people you live and work and buy your groceries with," Neilsen said.

The projects can also mean an immediate boost to the local economy and contractors are hired to work on the renovations, who then in turn spend their money in the city, Neilsen said.



DAMIEN FISHER PHOTO

Mayor Jim Neilsen speaks yesterday about the importance of community development for the city.

"Every dollar invested leads to \$7 spent in the local economy," he said.

There is concern about the future of

these programs in light of recent federal cuts. Funding for New Hampshire's community development block grant program is down 33 percent since 2001, and the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority said the HOME program has lost 45 percent of its funding since 2010.

Jim Menihane, the director of housing development for the housing Finance Authority, urged people to contact their representatives and ask them to keep funding the grant programs.

"The federal funding is drying up," Menihane said.

Neilsen wants to see the progress Claremont has made continue, and he knows it will need help from community development programs to do that.

"I'm proud of our city," he said. "I think we've done a lot."

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Damien Fisher can be reached at (603) 543-3100, ext. 147, or by email at dfisher@eagletimes.com. Follow on Twitter @DFisherReporter.