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Rutland Housing Agency Gets \$1.75 Million for Low Income Loans

by Nina Keck

Ongoing efforts to improve housing stock in downtown Rutland got a much-needed boost Monday.

At a news conference in Rutland, State Treasurer Beth Pearce announced \$1.75 million in capital funding for NeighborWorks of Western Vermont, a local, nonprofit housing agency that provides low interest loans. Speaking to a crowd of several dozen in northwest Rutland, Pearce lauded the city's efforts to work as a community to improve its neighborhoods and get rid of blighted properties.

Ludy Biddle, the director of Neighborworks, says the \$1.75 million will be used to provide low-interest loans to low-income homeowners, landlords and prospective home-buyers who might not otherwise qualify for a traditional loan. For some distressed parts of the city, she says this investment, coupled with other recent improvements such as new curbs, streetlights, sidewalks and trees, are making a real difference.

"Oh gosh," says Biddle. "It's amazing. We see people out walking with their kids; we see people coming to events here. And then people are just fixing up their homes because they feel good about it now."

Michael Bardwell, who lives in northwest Rutland, says compared to when he moved into the neighborhood three years ago, things look much better and drug trafficking is down.

"Before, I used to see stuff going on out on the streets," says Bardwell. "But I have not seen that in quite a while, so it is getting better."

He especially likes that the city tore down a vacant, rundown house on a nearby corner. NeighborWorks is turning the lot into a children's playground. Perfect, says Bardwell, for his 2-year-old granddaughter.