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Straw Mansion reborn

By DAN MAGAZU
dmagazu@manchexpress.com

About 60 people showed up at an open house yesterday to celebrate the completion of 33 new low-income apartments at 15 Temple Court in the city's downtown.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the Straw Mansion Apartments are complete!" exclaimed Robert Tourigny, the executive director for Manchester Neighborhood Housing Services.

MNHS bought the 136-year-old Straw Mansion, along with the former Uptown Motel building, in 2002. With help from federal, state and city money and many private contributions, they completed the \$6 million renovation project.

Former Ward 3 alderman, and current Mayor Frank Guinta, spoke about the challenge of representing such an eclectic ward.

"We spent a lot of time trying to convince the neighborhood that this project is not



City officials talk at the open house for the new Straw Mansion Apartments project. From left: Alderman-at-Large Mike Lopez; MNHS Executive Director Robert Tourigny, Mayor Frank Guinta, Ward 3 Alderman Pat Long, and Ward 12 Alderman Armand Forest. (Express Photo/Dan Magazu)

just good for the neighborhood, but good for the entire city," Guinta said. "These projects are exactly what Manchester needs."

Guinta's successor in Ward 3, Alderman Pat Long, was also in attendance, along with Ward 12 Alderman Armand Forest and Alderman-at-Large Mike Lopez.

Getting the project completed wasn't easy, Tourigny said. Problems with the original general contractor forced MNHS to act as their own general contractor during the final year of renovation.

Claire Monier, the executive director of the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, likened the middle stages of the project to a teenage child.

"We began to wonder, will this project ever grow up and function as a member of society?" Monier said.

The Straw Mansion was originally owned by Ezekiel Straw, a former New Hampshire governor who helped design the grid pattern for Manchester's city streets.

The architect for the project was John Jordan from Jordan Design.