

New homeowner gets buy with help from Friends

By [Robin Lord](#)

STAFF WRITER

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CHATHAM — Rory Nickerson, a 26-year-old carpenter whose ancestors were the original founders of Chatham, needed help finding an affordable home in a town where the median house costs \$591,000.

And he got it.

A unique public, private and nonprofit collaboration created four affordable units out of a former commercial space on Balfour Lane just outside the town center. Nickerson plans to sign mortgage papers for one of the condominiums this week.

Nickerson was the first picked in a lottery process last summer. Two other individuals and a married couple, all with ties to Chatham, were also picked.

"It was a golden opportunity," Nickerson said at an open house for the condos yesterday. "I feel very fortunate."

The lead agency on the project, Lower Cape Cod Community Development Corp. in Eastham, joined forces with the nonprofit Friends of Chatham Affordable Housing, the town of Chatham, and with TD Banknorth to completely renovate the condos.

The \$1 million project brings Chatham's affordable housing stock to just under 5 percent, according to housing authority Director Valerie Foster. The town is nearly halfway to the state-mandated goal that requires each municipality to have 10 percent of its housing stock classified as affordable.

Balfour Lane is in the Cornfield Village Center, which is one of the areas the town has identified for new growth.

"To do affordable housing, you have to find many ways," Friends of Chatham Affordable Housing member Florence Seldin told about 40 people at the open house. "There isn't one right way."

The germ of the idea for the Balfour Lane units came three years ago from real estate developer Ronald Rudnick, who knew of office space that had been vacated.

He went to Seldin, who was then chairwoman of the Chatham Housing Authority, and told her of his idea to create affordable units in the building. Seldin went to the Lower Cape CDC and the ball started rolling.

With "sizable" donations from Rudnick and another Chatham businessman, David Oppenheim, plus other private donations, the Friends group gave \$300,000 to the project, Seldin said.

The town gave a total of \$260,000 in two installments from the Community Preservation Act fund, and TD Banknorth gave a \$10,000 grant toward energy-efficient materials and appliances for the units.

Quick-growing bamboo was used for flooring throughout the units and all lighting and appliances are

energy-efficient, according to builder Eric Barsness, who was the contractor for the job.

As he toured Nickerson's new home yesterday, Arthur Matott of Orleans, former Lower Cape CDC board member, said the project was proof that public and private interests can address the affordable housing issue together.

"It shows you what can be done with coordination, cooperation and the will," he said.

Robin Lord can be reached at rlord@capecodonline.com.

Balfour Lane housing project

Four 1,000-square-foot, two-bedroom condominiums

- Each unit sold for \$154,156
- All units will be owned by individuals or families with local ties
- Units are deed-restricted to stay affordable forever
- When a unit is resold, it will go to someone earning less than 80 percent of the area's median income, about \$40,000 for a single person

Source: Lower Cape Cod Community Development Corp.