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Resurgence begins on Pine Street

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The house at 37 Pine St. came down Monday as city and state officials said Rutland's future was looking up.

The demolition of the property, claimed by the city at a tax sale in 2011, was not directly related to the \$1.25 million grant Gov. Peter Shumlin announced just a few yards away. However, four more houses like it could be demolished with the grant and seven more rehabilitated.

"I really feel most people in the city will see this not just as the removal of a blighted property, but the start of a resurgence," Rutland Redevelopment Authority executive director Brennan Duffy said. "This event marks what I would call the culmination of the planning stages. ... Now the real work will begin."

Mayor Christopher Louras said how the properties are acquired will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Duffy said the process will include an appraisal and the city will not be able to pay more than the amount a house is appraised at, while Shumlin assured that eminent domain would play no role in the effort.

The city will use the grant in partnership with NeighborWorks of Western Vermont, which will purchase and rehabilitate the houses as well as assess those to be slated for demolition. Louras said the effectiveness of public-private partnerships was demonstrated first during the cleanup from the 2007 nor'easter and again during the recovery effort following Tropical Storm Irene.

"Now, three years later, the city of Rutland is facing probably its greatest challenge," he said. "We learned from those events the key to success is collaboration and partnership."

Louras said Project Vision, the community engagement process launched by the Rutland City Police Department, had made great inroads into getting people and institutions in the Northwest neighborhood working together.

"It is through that partnership of Project Vision, through that collaboration, that we recognize locally when some

people see blighted properties, we see opportunities and action," he said.

Louras said the grant-funded effort will serve to "dedensify" the neighborhood, replacing apartment houses with single-family homes and, in some cases, green space that could serve as a playground or community garden.

Project Vision Chairman Joe Krause said the effort would transform the Northwest neighborhood into one of the most attractive places to live in America.

"Those are big words, I know," he said. "It's not going to happen overnight."

The more immediate effort funded by the grant would not happen overnight, either. Duffy said he was looking at a four- to five-year time frame.

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