

■ BUDGET PROPOSAL WOULD EXTEND CONVERSION GRANTS

Bellevue plan aims at fewer rental sites



By Scott Wartman

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BELLEVUE – Bellevue's proposed city budget would continue a grant program to reduce rental properties and would add part-time staff to maintain foreclosed properties.

The budget for the city the next fiscal year would retain the \$40,000 for the program which encourages property owners to convert rental units into single-family dwellings or other uses.

"Any time you can take a particular building built as a single family and convert it back to one of its original uses, that is a good thing," said Councilman Steve Guidugli, who conceived the program. "The house is being used as intended in its inception."

City Council members said the rental conversion program has exceeded expectations since it began in 2004. The grants have eliminated 28 rental units. The city grants \$2,500 for eliminating one unit, \$5,000 for two units and \$7,500 for three units to be used to convert purchased or vacant rental properties. About 23 percent of Bellevue's housing stock is rental.

Tyler Hildebrand's new home and art studio received a \$5,000 boost from the rental conversion program to rehab a vacant multi-family building on Fairfield Avenue.

Hildebrand will open up Hilde's Gallery June 6 in the 400-block of Fairfield Avenue. The gallery is moving a few blocks east from the property he rented since October 2007.

The grant convinced him to stay in Bellevue and buy property, he said. The building needed major repairs and still had remnants of

Artist Tyler Hildebrand new home and art studio, Hilde's Gallery, received a \$5,000 boost from Bellevue's rental conversion program to rehab a vacant multi-family building on Fairfield Avenue.

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