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## Another \$700,000 Harbour Towers penthouse is sold

[David Collins](#)

James Stidfole, with his big mane of curly gray hair, is such a familiar figure in downtown New London that it's hard to imagine he hasn't lived here for many years.

But Stidfole, a board member and longtime official of Hygienic Art, one of the familiar faces of that Bank Street arts institution, has lived for the last 34 years on Smith Cove in the Quaker Hill section of Waterford.

That is he did live in Quaker Hill until about three weeks ago, when he and his wife, Sherburne Stidfole, an elementary school music teacher in Waterford, moved into their new penthouse at Harbour Towers on Bank Street.

Stidfole said one of the first liberating things he did as a downtown resident was walk to the Dutch Tavern for lunch.

"It's just a whole new world," he said.

He said he is also looking forward to participating directly in city politics, beginning with a vote in the likely upcoming mayoral primary.

Stidfole said he is still a little chagrined by - though happy with - the unusual financing arrangements that allowed he and his wife to buy condominium P1 at Harbour Towers, perhaps the one of the building's five penthouses with the best view.

On the southeast corner of the nine-floor building, the Stidfoles have not just a wide view out the Thames River toward Long Island Sound, but they can also see over the spires and rooftops of downtown New London.

The deed, with a selling price of \$700,000, was recorded last month.

Stidfole said the developers accepted, essentially, their house in Waterford in trade for the penthouse, covering about half the selling price.

The rest was financed with a reverse mortgage that will give them life use of the condominium - they are both 66. When they die, the half that was financed with the sale of their Waterford house will go to their estate and the rest will go to the building investors.

For the last few weeks, the Stidfoles have been busy condensing some 34 years of collecting down to condo-size dimensions.

The penthouse has a lot of closets, though, Stidfole says, and the building's carpenter has finished a series of built-in oak bookshelves that have helped make the move easier. The condo is already decorated with a lot of the couple's art work and even a baby grand piano. Stidfole, who is a wood turner who sells his bowls and other pieces at Hygienic shows, has also leased some space downtown for his woodworking studio. He is planning arrangements to move his 400-pound lathe from Quaker Hill.

His wife has sold her antique MG. Stidfole's own 1960 Buick Invicta is also on the market. They are having a tag sale Saturday, at 119 Norwich Road, Quaker Hill, and some of the thousands of books that won't make it to Harbour Towers will be on sale.

When I caught up with Stidfole Thursday for a tour of his new home he had just come back from helping serve breakfast to the homeless at the Congregational church on State Street, a weekly routine.

He said he will probably continue to drive to the early-morning breakfasts, until the weather gets

really warm.

Many of the condominiums in the Bank Street building have still not been sold and remain empty, although people are living in four of the five penthouses, Stidfole says.

Many of the building residents are also affiliated with the arts, he says, and they are already planning a series dinner, with a stop and a course at each person's home. They may start with wine and hors d'oeuvres at P1, he says.

And while the Stidfoles used to look up at birds passing overhead, now they can look down at the birds, seeing their backs instead of their stomachs.

"We're trading a close view of the water for a long view," Stidfole said. "It's been fun."

And now that big mane of grey hair will be an even more familiar sight downtown.

*This is the opinion of David Collins.*

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