

LOCATION, LOCATION LOCATION

Fed official's visit heralds vision for Granite Square

By ERIC BAXTER

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Manchester's Granite Square was always a West Side family neighborhood, but about a decade ago that began to change.

The longtime residents said the multi-family buildings were purchased by absentee landlords. Renting standards went down, and their neighborhood's pride



Mayor Frank Guinta and HUD regional director Taylor Caswell walked through the Granite Square neighborhood on Friday to help kick off what could become an area revitalization effort. (Express Photo/Eric Baxter)

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Granite Square

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and character went with it.

But soon the downward spiral may be snapped. On Friday, Aug. 17 a visit from Taylor Caswell, the New England regional director for the U.S. Housing and Urban Development, signaled what could become the first steps in breathing new life into the dying, crime-ridden area.

"We're very glad, I think they're finally going to do something," resident Diane Bourque said.

She and her husband Roland are lifelong residents of the city and Roland grew up in the house now live in on West Street. The couple watched as the neighborhood changed and decayed, and they became two of a handful of neighborhood hold-outs.

"Look around and you can see the buildings that are owner-occupied," Bourque said. "Those are the nice

ones, the ones with flowers, just a little something, but the pride comes through."

The idea of owner-occupied buildings is one that was embraced by NeighborWorks Greater Manchester, which has been pushing for a change in that part of the city for months.

NeighborWorks executive director Robert Tourigny said part of the challenge facing the area was finding people who not only wanted to invest in the area but live there as well.

"It's about location, location, location," he said.

NeighborWorks, along with HUD, state and city officials are planning to make the neighborhood a good location by using a number of tools to help improve the Granite Square area.

Manchester Economic Development director Jay Minkarah said the neighborhood walk-through was a

very initial step, but changes could come within a year.

"What we're embarking in is a strategy to help uplift the neighborhood," he said. "We want to create more incentives for investment and bring more people and businesses to the neighborhood."

The neighborhood, bound roughly by Conant Street to the north, Clinton Street to the south, Dover Street to the east, and Quincy Street to the west, is also subject to change.

"What the exact parameters will be is one of the things we are looking at we move forward," Minkarah said. "But this is a great area, and the changes to Granite Street (and the Granite Street bridge), and on Main Street, will only make it easier. If we come back here in a year we will be able to discuss the changes that have been made, and what else will be coming."

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