

Absentee landlords no more

Agency offers West Side tenants help in buying their buildings

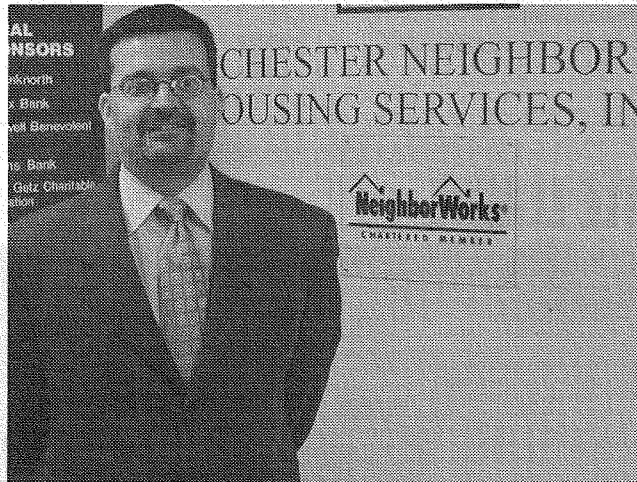
By DAN MAGAZU
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Officials of Manchester Neighborhood Housing Services are trying to address the issue of absentee landlords, something many aldermen feel is a root cause of crime in the city.

The organization is sending out letters to tenants in about 60 multi-family apartment buildings that are up for sale on the city's West Side. The letters are meant to encourage tenants to buy their building by offering help.

The group would assist the prospective owners by holding workshops on home ownership, performing free credit reports and requiring only a 1 percent down payment.

"It starts with education," Neighborhood Housing Services executive director Robert Tourigny said. "We won't consider anyone who won't



Manchester Neighborhood Housing Services Executive Director Robert Tourigny. (Express Photo/Dan Magazu)

go through our homeownership seminar."

After the seminar, Tourigny said that the group will work one-on-one with prospective owners to set up a path to qualify for financing. Qualified residents would have a household income between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per year.

"It's a great opportunity to accumulate equity," Tourigny said.

At a special meeting held

on Tuesday, Aug. 8, to address crime in the city, officials pointed the finger at absentee landlords who fail to perform adequate background checks and do not control the number of tenants living in their buildings.

"We need to hold these landlords responsible," said Ward 5 Alderman Ed Osborne at the meeting.

Aldermen noted that not all absentee landlords do a

poor job, but that owner-occupied landlords tend to keep a better eye on their tenants.

"Everybody loves the idea of owner-occupied units," Tourigny said. "An owner in New Jersey is probably going to be less considerate of his tenants than an owner living in the same building as them."

The price of the buildings range from \$189,900 for a two-family to \$485,900 for a four-family. The group is not working with the current owners of the buildings.

Prospective owners may register for the homeownership seminar, which will be held on Saturday, Sept. 9. Neighborhood Housing Services will hold a follow-up workshop on Saturday, Oct. 28 for people interested in becoming landlords.

The organization has been offering services of this kind since its inception in 1992.

If you are interested in attending either of those free seminars, call Neighborhood Housing Services at 626-4663.