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BY JODY REESE

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The low-income housing puzzle



Last week, we found out Manchester Neighborhood Housing Services is rehabbing the Silver Mill on the east side near the city highway department garage and turning it into

affordable housing.

This is another step in redeveloping Manchester's old mills. The neighborhood is already home to the Twin Towers and other condominium developments.

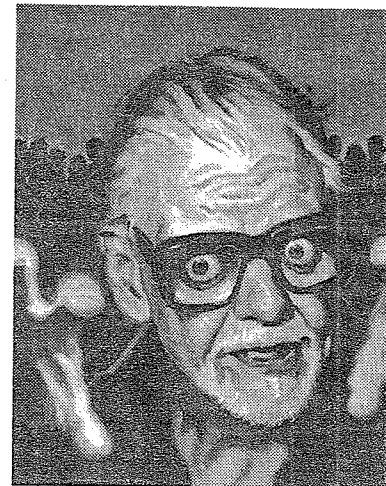
Though this is clearly a good project, I do have a few concerns with adding more housing to the market and creating an entirely low-income development.

Manchester's housing market is in flux, with hundreds of properties sitting unsold. Prices are declining and rents have been sliding downward. This is good news for many who need lower rents, and it seems justified given how high rents soared in the last few years, but there is a downside: it means the owners of these apartment buildings won't have the equity or income to fix up their properties. This has all sorts of negative consequences, including less lead abatement and further dilapidation of buildings. For a city like Manchester that has so much old building stock and many investor-owners of property, the mix of decreasing rents and decreasing property values is bad news.

This is not to say that Manchester Neighborhood Housing shouldn't rehab the Silver Mill, just that the nonprofit should also look at rehabbing much of city's old housing rental stock that is sitting on the market now.

My other concern is that the Silver Mill project will be all low-income housing. True, low income isn't what it used to be. A person can qualify for an apartment if he makes as much as \$26,900 a year. However, there are only four one-bedroom apartments in the complex. Most apartments will be two bedrooms (for one or two parents and child).

There was a housing movement some years ago that paired low-income housing with medium or even upscale housing. The thinking behind such efforts is that the development is paid for with fewer tax dollars and creates an environment that exposes people in a positive way to different income levels. For example, it would expose the children of a single mother working a service job to professionals. This makes it more likely those kids will want to go to college and less likely they will see no future for themselves, which can lead to violence, drug use and promiscuity.



14 Attack of the fall movie

Do not fear — this fall's film features many worth your \$9. We look at 15 of the most promising films plus at peek at this weekend's horror movie double feature at the Capitol Center Arts. Not only will two of George A. Romero's be show but the zombie master himself will to answer audience questions

Cover illustration by Cameron Bennett.

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Admittedly, this description is a bit extreme. But it does point out how people can become ghettoized in poor neighborhoods.

I fear that if Manchester is not careful its center city, which includes the Silver Mill, could become a ghetto where people feel trapped. This neighborhood needs a mix of people, including young professionals and working folks. A neighborhood of single mothers is a dangerous thing.

Without a doubt, Manchester Neighborhood Housing does an excellent job with its property management and fills an important role in providing quality housing to low-income families. Let's just be careful about how these developments can affect the entire city.

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