

## **NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE - SPRUCE STREET NEIGHBORHOOD**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The planning department conducted this profile of the Spruce Street neighborhood in response to concerns raised by the Planning and Zoning Commission at meetings in January and February of 1992. Information was gathered from a variety of sources including a windshield survey of the neighborhood and interviews with the building official, engineering construction inspectors, zoning enforcement officer, sanitarian, health director, deputy fire marshal, members of the Manchester Police Department, the downtown outreach worker, and others active in the Spruce Street neighborhood. We also reviewed available census information.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND PHYSICAL CONDITIONS**

The study area extends from Main Street on the west to Norman Street on the east and from Center Street on the north to Charter Oak Street on the south. Known as the "East Side", this is one of the older and more established parts of Manchester. It is an urbanized neighborhood built before zoning and subdivision regulations were adopted by the town, and reflects the development pattern prevalent during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

The neighborhood is served by a system of local residential streets in a grid pattern. Most of the streets have sidewalks but sidewalk conditions are among the poorest in town. The streets are relatively narrow by today's standards. On-street parking is either limited to one or two hours or prohibited on these streets because of their narrow width.

The Spruce Street neighborhood is characterized by a mix of uses and activities. The Main Street central business district and neighborhood oriented businesses on Spruce Street are within easy walking distance of most of the neighborhood. Several public facilities are also located in the neighborhood. The Spruce Street firehouse is directly across the street from the Nathan Hale School, which is a focus for the neighborhood. Recreation and open space includes Nathan Hale School, Bennet Jr. High which is home of the East Side "Rec" Center, and Charter Oak Park. We observed there is no formally developed neighborhood park in the area for pre-school or young children within walking distance for this age group.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Spruce Street neighborhood has been referred to as a neighborhood in transition, a neighborhood on the brink, or a neighborhood that could go "either way". We don't disagree with that assessment, but believe the neighborhood is not beyond repair. The housing is old and getting older, population has declined over the past 10 years, and public infrastructure is in need of repair or replacement. There is no doubt there are neighborhood residents who have serious problems and who need special services. We also recognize that Spruce Street is a well-traveled, highly visible street, in many ways as important a projection of the town's image as Main Street.

There are a number of grassroots efforts such as the neighborhood crime watch, PRIDE, and even the recent example of a group of neighbors petitioning the Board of Directors to adopt a stronger anti-litter ordinance to help eliminate garbage problems they see in their neighborhood. The town

has responded by supporting these efforts with a variety of programs to address both the physical and social needs of the neighborhood.

This combination of activities has occurred within the past several months and is a very encouraging sign for the Spruce Street neighborhood. However, the town must continue and even strengthen its efforts in the areas of code enforcement, housing rehabilitation, and community policing, to reinforce positive change and encourage more participation among the residents to become more involved in issues which are effecting the neighborhood.