

Neighborhood work 'really inspiring'

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Stephen Hopkins, a neighborhood organizer who has been hard at work in the Old Five Points neighborhood, didn't mince words when talking about what he and others were up against when they set about reclaiming the area.

"This was the neighborhood from hell," he told The Herald-Sun's Tyler Confoy last week on a tour of the reviving area. He and others told of junkies and prostitutes frequenting the area, which takes its name from the intersection of Cleveland, Mangum and Corporation streets.

Hopkins was showing off the progress with a neighborhood tour hosted by Peter Skillern, executive director of Reinvestment Partners.

A highlight was a home at 1224 N. Roxboro St. that Enta Claro recalled as being a run-down "shoebox." Work is 90 percent complete to turn it into a bright-green home. It will be the first finished project of the Latino Community Development Center, of which Claro is housing project manager.

The Old Five Points (also called Little Five Points) rehabilitation is part of an exciting wave of neighborhood reclamation around downtown. There's little doubt downtown revival has passed a good tipping point, and momentum will continue. The past decade or so has been transformative with such major projects as West Village and American Tobacco's redevelopment, the new Durham Bulls Athletic Park, the Diamond View project, the Durham Performing Arts Center, the new government human services complex and a host of smaller restoration projects and new developments.

But we've always known that for this city to realize its aspirations and potential, that resurgence needed to spread outward.

And it's doing so – with gritty efforts in areas such as Old Five Points, Cleveland-

Holloway, Burch Avenue, Golden Belt and Angier-Driver and with sweeping projects such as the city's Southside-Rolling Hills development now so visibly underway.

In East Durham, major efforts such as the refurbishing of old schools into Holton Career Center and Maureen Joy Charter School are boosting grass-roots efforts to rebirth that area.

Wednesday, touring Old Five Points, Wendy Jacobs described that neighborhood's efforts:

"They're doing it with, sometimes, some help from city and county government, and a lot of times just partnering and networking, getting grants, being resourceful."

That's true of so many Durham efforts to move forward and in Old Five Points and the other rebounding neighborhoods the work is, to borrow Jacobs' description Wednesday, "really inspiring."