

# Community group plans to buy Merchants Hotel

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THE Merchants Hotel has been criticized as a magnet for brutal criminal activity on Selkirk Avenue but community leaders now hope the building will attract renewal and growth in the neighbourhood.

Community leaders announced Monday morning that a neighbourhood coalition, along with the University of Winnipeg, has made a conditional offer to purchase the hotel and adjoining parking lots, and it's been accepted by the owner. The deal is contingent on viable plans for the property being developed during a series of community consultations.

"This has been something people have dreamed about for years," said Rob Neufeld, executive director of the North End Community Renewal Corp., a non-profit group founded in 1998 to promote the social, economic and cultural renewal of the North End of Winnipeg.

Architect Dudley Thompson said the 98-year-old hotel building is in good shape, adding he believes it can be easily retrofitted for alternative uses.

Thompson said preliminary plans call for the main floor of the hotel to be converted into retail space, the second floor for educational use and the third floor into housing.

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