

Charlie Baker focuses on housing, schools in visit to Roxbury

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He made “revitalizing urban centers” a pledge in his inaugural address and Gov. Charlie Baker immediately set to work on it yesterday, leaving behind the pomp of his Beacon Hill swearing-in ceremony to visit the Kroc Center in Roxbury and hear from a group that has helped reshape the neighborhood.

“I want to make sure the neighborhood residents who have fought so hard to improve the Dudley neighborhood are not forced out because of rising rents and home prices,” Evelyn Correa-Gonzalez told the new governor.

The Roxbury mom, who bought an affordable housing unit on land owned by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and is now the volunteer president of its community land trust, was among the speakers who got Baker’s ear — including pint-sized Mayka Ware.

“I like my teachers and I am blessed for the food I have,” said the third-grader at the Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School, who dreams of being a veterinarian and wants a clean community. “I want my school to be a big school so that students have enough classrooms.”

Baker, who signed a board inside the center promising to create more “affordable housing” and “great schools,” told the group he plans to “spotlight communities where great things are happening.”

“Success sometimes is doing more of what works and less of what doesn’t,” he said. “Frankly there’s a lot of great things going on all over Massachusetts, in many cases in its toughest and most disadvantaged neighborhoods. ... We are going to root out these success stories, we are going to find more. We are going to build great communities from one end of the commonwealth to the other with help from people like you.”

Correa-Gonzalez noted Baker could have gone anywhere in the state on his inauguration day. “That he chose to come to Dudley shows he is going to be willing to closely work with the community,” she said.

But Chris Jones, head of DSNI, said the “rubber meets the road as we look to see how we realize those promises” made by Baker.

