

BLIGHT WATCH: Historic Jackson Street home to be saved

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MUNCIE -- The city of Muncie has signed an agreement with Flaherty & Collins to save a 19th century house at 703 E. Jackson St. from demolition.

"We are going to tear off the back end, and they have agreed to do the facade restoration, to restore the shell of the building," said Bill Morgan, the city's historic preservation officer.

The agreement is part of a memorandum of agreement the city has negotiated with Indiana Landmarks, Ball State University, Flaherty & Collins and the state historic preservation officer concerning the future of two dozen historic homes the city had planned to demolish.

The city earmarked \$340,000 in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funds for the demolitions. But the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent federal agency, stepped in, forcing city officials to consider alternatives to the demolition of the unsafe, abandoned or foreclosed houses in or adjacent to historic districts.

All parties to the agreement have signed except for the advisory council, on whose signature the city is waiting.

"It's a small, two-story brick house that has been added on to a dozen times," Morgan said. "The additions are primarily wooden structures that we will remove."

County records indicate the building was constructed in 1880, but researchers believe it was built between 1860 and 1870, based on its architectural style. It has a hole in the roof and other problems.

"We don't have a plan in place for finishing out the interior yet," Morgan said.

The structure is owned by East Central Reinvestment Corp., but was acquired in a tax sale by Duane Miller, a developer for Indianapolis-based Flaherty & Collins, one of the Midwest's largest developers of multi-family properties.

In Muncie, the firm has renovated Graystone Apartments, Canopic Apartments and Jackson &

Vine Apartments (across the street from 703 E. Jackson St.), and built Millennium Place, which replaced the Munsyana Homes public housing project. The firm is also developing Centennial Place, which is replacing the Parkview Apartments public housing complex.

Miller might renovate the interior of 703 E. Jackson for a leasing office for Jackson & Vine or for a rental unit, Morgan said.

"It hasn't been occupied for ages," he said. It sits in the Emily Kimbrough Historic District.

This story is part of a weekly series looking at blighted properties around Muncie. To suggest a property for the series, email the address and a brief description to seths@muncie.gannett.com or awalker@muncie.gannett.com, or mail it to The Star Press, Local News Desk, P.O. Box 2408, Muncie, Ind. 47307.