

Belleville infill program making neighborhood progress



Before (left) and after scenes of the duplex at 710/712 E. D St. show the remarkable progress.

The first property associated with the city of Belleville’s Infill Redevelopment Program is making a substantial impact on its East D Street neighborhood.

“The building had been empty (probably) five or six years,” Maribeth Clancy, a neighborhood resident of nearly 35 years, said this summer. “It was in terrible shape and falling apart before our eyes. Renovating the property is definitely good for our neighborhood. We are not interested in selling our house at this time, but if we wanted to do that, we would have had trouble. I’m sure all surrounding property values plummeted (because of the condition of that property). We look forward to the day when we will have new neighbors.”

In 2019, the duplex at 710/712 E. D St., a vacated property inherited by the city of Belleville, was sold to Tygracon Properties in the amount of \$1 under the city’s new Infill Redevelopment Program. The program seeks qualified contractors to submit plans to the city’s Economic Development Division on their intent to

rehabilitate eligible properties that would otherwise be demolished. From there, the city selects the most qualified contractor for the project based on the company’s ability to manage the rehabilitation of the property, size of the investment the company intends to make, and the impact that will have on the community. Renovations began on the D Street property in October 2019.

“We have a lot of older housing stock in Belleville that is not only architecturally interesting and worthy of being saved, but through this program, we are able to get some of the properties we inherited livable and back on the tax rolls,” said Mayor Mark Eckert earlier this year. “This is an economic development tool we are trying in order to redevelop current infrastructure in the city which will help to revitalize some neighborhoods. I would say the first property rehab has been received very well by residents, and it will be a good thing for all involved.”

According to co-owner of Tygracon Properties Karl Gilpin, the rehab project

at the duplex was a complete “gut job” which required the structure to be stripped down to its 115-year-old floor joists and masonry walls. The floors then had to be leveled, and they completely reframed the interior, modernizing the floor plan to include a half-bath on the first floor and a master bath and utility room on the second. Gilpin also said that a new roof, gutters, and windows had already been installed, and all new HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and a new sewer line are also included.

“We’re one of the few companies in town that reinvests and rehabs some of these older homes in Belleville, so we were well-prepared to work with the city to save this grand brick structure under the Infill Program, which would otherwise not be an economically viable project” Gilpin said earlier this year. “You could never replace these old brick homes, or their cultural impact on the neighborhood if they were torn down. So, if they can be saved, doing these targeted projects under the Infill Program will lift up

entire neighborhoods in safety, property values, and tax revenue for the city. It’s an investment for us as a business and as community members.”

Upon completion of the renovation, the company will receive \$10,000 from the city.

“Given the cost of demolition for the structure would have been nearly \$25,000, this is actually saving the City money and getting property back in livable and taxable conditions,” said Eckert. “It is common for municipal organizations to employ incentive-based economic development tools to leverage local assets, and so far, this pilot program has been successful.”

The renovations at the D St. property are anticipated before the end of the year. The finished dwelling will boast two modern duplexes that nod to the history and heritage of the 200-year-old city.

To learn more about the Infill Redevelopment Program, visit <https://www.belleville.net/334/Business-Assistance>.

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