

## Habitat rehabs existing house

By Nancy DeVille  
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When you think of Habitat for Humanity, images of a house being built from the ground up by scores of volunteer homebuilders in hard hats probably come to mind.

But for the first time in its history, the Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity will revitalize a foreclosed property, at 704 Meridian St. in McFerrin Park in East Nashville, instead of building a home from scratch.

The move is part of the organization's new initiative called ReConstruct, designed to help revitalize Nashville neighborhoods by restoring and making needed improvements to existing homes.

"This property is in an area where the rehabilitation of it will be a major improvement for the entire neighborhood," said Ralph Knauss, COO with Nashville Area Habitat.

"This allows Habitat to further its mission of putting more families in homes."

The rehab is a joint effort between Habitat, the Metro Development and Housing Agency, which donated the property, and the Metro Historical Commission that is locating construction professionals to volunteer their services.

Work has begun on the two-bedroom, roughly 1,900-square-foot modest wood house, which once stood with boarded windows, faded white paint and in need of roof repairs. Sub-constructors are working with the Habitat staff to recondition the foundation and support of the house before volunteers are brought in for two community workdays.

Habitat is working to preserve as much of the architecture and integrity of the home as possible. While the home will be become more modernized, Habitat hopes to maintain the structure's high ceilings, larger windows and wood craftsmanship.

"Rehabbing this structure, which had been slated for demolition, will help to maintain the historic character of the neighborhood," said Tim Walker, executive director of the Historical Commission.

This is just one change of many the McFerrin Park neighborhood has seen in recent years. The

### TO HELP

Metro Historical Commission, Historic Nashville, Inc. and Tennessee Preservation Trust are working to get volunteers for two community workdays planned for **Saturday, March 27**, and **Saturday, April 3**.

Those who want to volunteer can e-mail Historic Neighborhood INC board president **David Price** at **info@historic-nashvilleinc.org**. Ten to 20 volunteers are needed each day and will meet at 7:30 a.m. for training and review of safety procedures. Work begins at 8 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m., with a lunch break around noon.

For information on how to qualify as a homeowner of this property, call **615-254-4663** or visit **www.habitatnashville.org**.

remodeled Levy Place apartments and the Dickerson Road Streetscape Project, which includes eight life-size buffalo statues, are among the significant improvements made by MDHA to help revitalize an area once plagued by crime and neglect. The McFerrin and Cleveland Park community centers have also been upgraded.

"Anytime you have undesirable homes in your neighborhood, it not only brings down the value of the surrounding homes, but also creates an unsafe environment," Knauss said. "By reconstructing this home in a neighborhood that has become a nice area, it removes that nuisance element."

To qualify for the rehab house, the future homeowner will need to meet similar qualifications of those for new Habitat construction. Those are: must have a need, partner and go through sweat equity program and have the ability to pay a small down payment and mortgage on the no-interest loan.

The rebuild should be complete by midsummer.

"We hope this pilot project is very successful, and we would like to build upon it so that we can go to other neighborhoods throughout the city."

Contact Nancy DeVille at 615-259-8304 or [ndeville@tennessean.com](mailto:ndeville@tennessean.com).