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## Preservationists urge the city to sell the crumbling James Lee House

By Wayne Risher

Posted November 17, 2010 at 5:03 p.m., updated November 17, 2010 at 10:10 p.m.

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PHOTO BY MIKE MAPLE // BUY THIS PHOTO

Preservation groups are asking that the James Lee House, seen here in a 2004 file photo, be sold.

said.

Blake's board, city agencies and preservation groups have been working behind the scenes for at least three years to save the Second Empire style structure at the northwest corner of Adams and Orleans.

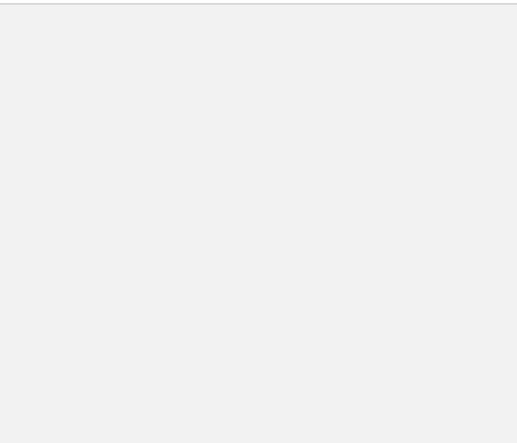
Andy Kitsinger, senior vice president of planning and development at the Center City Commission, said the Center City Development Corp.'s role would basically be development agent. The Downtown development board played a similar part in redevelopment of the Lowenstein Building as part of Court Square Center.

Preservation groups are asking that the James Lee House, a long-vacant Victorian mansion at 690 Adams, be sold to a developer with deep enough pockets to bring it back to life.

The City Council is scheduled to consider a resolution Tuesday calling for a search for the right developer through a request for proposals (RFP) by the Center City Development Corp.

The Harrson-Goyer-Lee House, as it is also known, is an architectural treasure, but "the place is in very bad shape," said Scott Blake, executive director of Victorian Village Inc., a community development corporation.

"If it's not restored soon, it becomes a matter of demolition by neglect," Blake



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"We're hoping we get interest from developers who are interested in redeveloping that property as an asset to the neighborhood, maybe a bed and breakfast or coffee shop, or something else in keeping with the (Victorian Village) master plan," Kitsinger said.

The Memphis College of Art traces its origins to the Lee house, which has been owned by the city since 1929 and vacant since 1959.

Blake said a community cleanup is scheduled at the house for Dec. 4 to make it more presentable before a "for sale" sign goes up.

Details can be found at victorianvillageinc.org.

– Wayne Risher: 529-2874

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November 17, 2010  
5:37 p.m.

**progressivememphis** writes:

In my opinion, selling it would greatly increase the danger of losing this house altogether. Once something is sold, the new owners have control over it. What guarantee would we have that they wouldn't tear it down to build, oh, let's say a CVS Pharmacy?

[Suggest removal](#)

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November 17, 2010  
5:42 p.m.

**robert30#348835** writes:

Why would a developer want this property. It's not big enough to do much with. It's also not a great location, so stop those CVS comments. It would have to be someone who just wanted to save the house. I doubt it would make a lot of sense financially.

[Suggest removal](#)

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November 17, 2010  
6:11 p.m.

**OtherDavid** writes:

Eh, use clauses can get written into sales contracts for historic structures. Eye is probably towards some millionaire taking it over for restoration and private residence. That'd be lots better than its current state as public property, right?

[Suggest removal](#)

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November 17, 2010  
8:13 p.m.

**Vile** writes:

I am Vile. Why waste money on something unusual and historic when the Village could go in debt and build another ball bouncing arena?

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Why do something different for a change?

Vile

November 17, 2010  
8:17 p.m.

**Allie** writes:



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Published 11/14/2010 at 12:05 a.m. 4 comments

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Published 11/15/2010 at 1:32 p.m. 45 comments

## Weather

Currently

36-Hour

Your Photos



Currently

49°

Fog/Mist

Wind: N 7mph

Today

52°

42°

Fri  
04:00 AM



Fog  
Temp: 43°

Fri  
04:00 PM



Sunny  
Temp: 57°

Sat  
04:00 AM



Partly Cloudy  
Temp: 49°

Feels Like: 43°  
Humidity: 92%  
Precin: 0%

Feels Like: 57°  
Humidity: 60%  
Precin: 0%

Feels Like: 49°  
Humidity: 86%  
Precin: 0%

Whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa I thought a couple years ago they were restoring this house? If not, why did I donate money that was supposedly towards them restoring this house?

[Suggest removal](#)

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November 17, 2010 8:19 p.m.

**joe4444 writes:**

While the preservationists are at it, why don't we urge someone to build a huge palace over all the poor areas of the city. And, why don't we urge some wealthy investor to buy everyone in the city a Lamborghini. And why don't we urge some wealthy person to turn the entire city of Memphis into chocolate. :D

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November 17, 2010 8:21 p.m.

**1American writes:**

Hey, if this works and the sale results in a rejuvenated James Lee House, maybe we could sell the whole town of Memphis (to say China) and they can rejuvenate the whole decaying town ... if they do, I'll take 10-1 odds that city hall will be the first thing they demolish!!!

[Suggest removal](#)

[Reply to this post](#)

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November 17, 2010 9:25 p.m.

**John\_\_Jones writes:**

Sad sad sad.

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I hate to see this house crumble.

[Reply to this post](#)

This is some of the best of Memphis architecture from the 19th century.

---

November 17, 2010 9:46 p.m.

**willwebb#206344 writes:**

This house that the city owns has been vacant for over 50 YEARS?! I think Mayor Wharton needs to sue himself for contributing to the city's blight!  
<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/...>

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November 17, 2010 10:14 p.m.

**carjo writes:**

The ideal use for this house is for some big money guy buys it and turns it into a classy restaurant ala The old Four Flames because there isn't a classy restaurant downtown where all the yuppies live.

[Suggest removal](#)

[Reply to this post](#)

However, I'm not sure of how far down Orleans is on Adams. If the location is bad then I rescind my idea.

---

November 17, 2010 11:35 p.m.

**Camelot writes:**

All of you that don't want to see anything bad happen to this house or property, pony up the money and buy it. Then you can preserve, sell it, tear it down, shove it up your ///. Sick of you do gooders trying to tell everyone else what to do with property.

[Suggest removal](#)

[Reply to this post](#)

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November 17, 2010 11:37 p.m.

**Allie writes:**

in response to [carjo](#):

“ The ideal use for this house is for some big money guy buys it and turns it into a classy restaurant ala The old Four Flames because there isn't a classy restaurant downtown where all the yuppies live.

However, I'm not sure of how far down Orleans is on Adams. If the location is bad then I rescind my idea.

It's within walking distance of some really nifty sites, such as Cavalry Episcopal. I was accosted by panhandlers last time I visited, and got the idea that bunches of young guys lived in the abandoned houses nearby - they were standing at a distance and taking turns sending over panhandlers so as not to panic people. Not a place I was completely comfortable as a woman by myself. But that could change if someone put effort into the neighborhood.

---

November 17, 2010 11:45 p.m.

**crappywebby#497292 writes:**

in response to [Camelot](#):

“ All of you that don't want to see anything bad happen to this house or



**Waterfall in McDonald's Drive-thru**  
5/5/10 12:42 p.m.



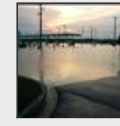
**Road Washed-Out**  
5/3/10 1:30 p.m.



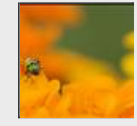
**Arlington TN Flooding**  
5/1/10 6:53 p.m.



**Arlington TN Flooding**  
5/1/10 6:53 p.m.



**Arlington TN Flooding**  
5/1/10 6:53 p.m.



**Untitled**  
4/30/10 10:23 a.m.

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## Calendar

NOV	NOV	NOV	BROWSE
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	
THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	MORE

**Memphis Writers Association**  
Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library

**Camp Good Grief's Gingerbread Dream**  
Memphis Botanic Garden

**Make It a Handmade Christmas**  
The Ozark Folk Center State Park

**Free cooking classes**  
Church Health Center Wellness

**Metalsmithing Apprenticeship Opportunity**  
National Ornamental Metal Museum

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**Camp Good Grief's Gingerbread Dream**  
Memphis Botanic Garden

**Make It a Handmade Christmas**  
The Ozark Folk Center State Park

**Metalsmithing Apprenticeship Opportunity**  
National Ornamental Metal Museum

**Trying To Make A Difference** 9 a.m.  
Manassas High School

**One Day Still Life Workshop with Sue Foell** 9 a.m.  
Memphis Botanic Garden

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property, pony up the money and buy it. Then you can preserve, sell it, tear it down, shove it up your ///. Sick of you do gooders trying to tell everyone else what to do with property.

Sounds great until somebody paints the house next door to your's fuchsia with canary yellow trim.

November 18, 2010  
8:21 a.m.

**dirty-smelly writes:**

It was supposed to be part of the Pink Palace properties, a house museum. If the city/Cohen can find some money for Memphis contractors to fix it up, not in a blind rush as these projects usually are bid, it keeps money here and keeps the house public. B and B? Why not.

[Suggest removal](#)

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November 18, 2010  
10:10 a.m.

**judetennessee writes:**

It was given to the City by Ms. McIntyre with a restrictive covenant regarding use. Sadly, these days older restrictive covenants aren't worth the paper they are written on.

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It is in terrible shape, has suffered severe termite damage similiar to the old First Methodist Church before it went up in flames and threatened to take much of downtown with it that terrible day.

Best and highest use would be a satellite for Memphis Academy of Art (its original home by the way) but the cost of restoration would be very costly. City has been very negligent in its stewardship, ATPA has its hands full with Woodruff Fontaine and now hard times are on us so it makes rehabilitation very doubtful. It would be possible to get historic tax credits if it were an income producing property that need federal tax deductions.

Why not make it our Gracie Mansion and allow (force?) mayor to live there. At least the area would get better police protection I imagine.

November 18, 2010  
10:59 a.m.

**Marian writes:**

If I won the lottery, I would fix up the house and LIVE there.

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**Rumba Room November special events** midnight

Rumba Room

**Camp Good Grief's Gingerbread Dream**

Memphis Botanic Garden

**Make It a Handmade Christmas**

The Ozark Folk Center State Park

**A New Face for an Old Broad**

Broad Avenue Arts District

**Anderson's Pottery holds its first ever "Studio Show & Sale"** 8 a.m.

Anderson's Pottery

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