



April 13, 2009

Board

Steve Auterman
George Blancett
Carrie Clark
Roscoe Feild
Richard Feltus
Mike Greenberg
Jocelyn Henderson
Hank Herrod, M.D.
Baker Gross, M.D.
Matt Love
Peggy Lovell
B. Lee Mallory
Gina Neely
Bill Nixon
Hunter Rittenberry, M.D.

Advisors

Gene Cashman
Beth Flanagan
Andy Kitsinger
LaVerne Lovell, M.D.
Patrick Neely
Laura Veasart
June West
Randle Witherington

Executive Director

Scott Blake

Staff

Nora Tucker
Gary Cook

Director Emeritus

L. Eldridge Wright

Master Plan for the Adaptive Reuse of the Lee House

Intent

Victorian Village Inc. CDC exists to create a vibrant and diverse urban neighborhood that treasures our architectural heritage and builds a community that is safe, clean and prosperous. What sets us apart from the dozens of other community development corporations is that we have an incredible collection of historic Victorian mansions in the heart of our neighborhood that will help spark the redevelopment effort.

For the past fifty years the intent was to restore the Lee House and open it as a museum, much like the Mallory Neely House and the Woodruff-Fontaine House. Time and experience has proven that the museum houses struggle to survive in the vacuum of a decaying neighborhood. Visitorship has dropped over the last 15 years due to the perception that the neighborhood is unsafe. We plan to re-energize the Historic Properties by creating the new residential neighborhood around these great homes. The Lee House is at the epicenter of the neighborhood. The restoration and adaptive re-use of the home will be a lynchpin project and a catalyst for further residential development in the district.

History and Current Conditions

The original house was built in 1848, added to in the 1860s, and the massive Italianate style front added in 1880. The house, along with the Woodruff-Fontaine house, was given to the City by the owners in 1927 to serve as the first College of Art. The College moved from the house to the location in Overton Park in the 1960s. The house was then put under a fifty year lease (for one dollar a year) to the local chapter of the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA). While many plans to restore the house have been floated over the years, the simple fact is that the City and its citizens cannot support another museum house. We believe that the future of the home and the neighborhood depends on finding a private sector owner to purchase the house and restore it for adaptive reuse following the strict guidelines for National Historic Properties published by the Department of the Interior.

The Team

This project would be a collaborative effort by:

- The City of Memphis
- Center City Commission
- Victorian Village Inc. Community Development Corporation
- Memphis Landmarks Commission
- Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities
- Memphis Heritage, Inc.

The Plan

1. The current lease-holders (APTA) have agreed to the master plan to allow the City to close out the fifty year lease (with three years remaining). Once the general services division arrives at a market value, the City then would sell the property to either the Center City Commission or Victorian Village Inc. (both 501©3 organizations) so that they can prepare a detailed RFP from local and national developers.

2. The RFP would follow the CCC's successful model used for the restoration of the Lincoln American Tower and the Lowenstein buildings on Main Street.

3. The Deed of Trust would carry certain limitations on the use of the building that would keep the home in keeping with the master plan of the neighborhood. Uses may include single-family dwelling, condominium, bed and breakfast, corporate headquarters, and professional offices.

4. The RFP would include development incentive packages such as the 20% tax credit for historic properties, tax freezes and low interest loans.

5. Victorian Village Inc and the APTA would assemble a committee that would be charged with reviewing the restoration process and policing the adherence to the Department of the Interiors Standards for rehabilitation. The State Historic Preservation Officer is also required to review all construction documents to be sure that the project meets the Standards of the Department of the Interior.

Action Steps

1. Meet with Robert Lipscomb, Bud Boon, and H.U.D. to conceive of the best method of working with the administration and city council to start this process. **Done.**
2. VVI and the Center City Commission to outline the master plan in detail, with milestones tied to calendar dates and product. **Done**
3. Have the city attorney review the deed documents. **Done**
4. Redraw the lot lines through OPD to benefit the APTA for the formal gardens easement and parking areas. **Done**
5. City Administration approval of project. **Pending**
6. City Council committee review and approval.
7. Full City Council approval.
8. Have the city sell the property to CCC or VVI and give the proceeds to the Memphis College of Art and required by the 1929 deed of Trust.
9. CCC to produce the comprehensive Request for Proposal
10. Require the potential owners to post a performance bond equal to the entire cost of the restoration. In case of default the project can be completed by Victorian Village Inc.

