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December 9, 2005

COMMUNITY VOICES

Historic house enjoying revival

By Mike Quinn

The Historic Ambassador House is on the move again.



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The 175-year-old former home of Ambassador Addison C. Harris and his wife, India Harris, a founder of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, is in Fishers Heritage Park at East 106th Street and Eller Road.

The house and a stone outbuilding were saved at the last minute from the wrecking ball in 1996 through the efforts of Fishers Town Council leaders and concerned residents.

The buildings were moved from the original site, about where the Starbucks now sits in the northwest section of East 96th Street and Allisonville Road.

A committee of volunteers has presented recommendations that the historic home and grounds be restored as a town museum and

heritage gardens, as well as serve as an education center to expand appreciation of community history, heritage gardening and the visual arts.

Recommendations also call for developing facilities for group functions, cultural entertainment and neighborhood activities.

Though renovations to the home and development of the heritage gardens and sunken entertainment terrace remain incomplete, recent developments have energized the effort.

A new tax-exempt nonprofit organization -- The Historic Ambassador House and Heritage Gardens -- has hired professional staff, made physical improvements to the house and is organizing a public fund drive to begin in March.

In addition, a painting of the house has been created by an award-winning Indiana landscape artist and will be reproduced in limited quantities as an amenity to donors.

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The Town Council recently demonstrated its continuing support of this community treasure by budgeting for 2006 a matching grant of up to \$200,000.

Another boost to the undertaking occurred during the recent Fishers Renaissance Faire at Heritage Park. The new Ambassador House board members were buoyed by the encouragement and pledges of assistance made by hundreds of visitors to the Ambassador House booth at the fair.

Sisters Jean Young and Nina Horton, Indianapolis, took special interest in the house while visiting the Renaissance fair booth.

Young said she was born in the home. Horton said she has many fond memories of spending several summers as a guest of India Harris when she was a child. Both expressed what appears to be a growing sentiment in the community: "We hope the house opens soon."

Donations may be made to The Ambassador House, Town Hall, 1 Municipal Drive, Fishers, IN 46038. A 16-minute video about the project is available for use by community organizations.

For additional information, contact Mike Quinn at 569-6300 or mike.quinn@cliftoncpa.com; or Executive Director Leslie Buse, 502-9530.

To write an installment, please contact us at fishersam@indystar.com or (317) 444-2600.



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Community Voices is a regular feature of Fishers A.M. This week's feature is by Fishers resident Mi... the Fishers Historic Preservation Committee and a member of the new Ambassador House board.

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