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October 18, 2006

## Town considers renovation

\$700,000 may be spent on Ambassador House

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**By Richard D. Walton**

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FISHERS -- It looks like a 175-year-old house will get a facelift.



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Facelift possible: The Ambassador House was built in the early 1830s and moved from 96th Street and Allisonville Road to Heritage Park in 1996. The town is pondering paying for a renovation that could include gardens for outdoor weddings. - 2002 Star file photo

The Fishers Town Council has directed staff to look into investing at least \$700,000 to renovate and restore the house. Pending final council approval, renovation could begin next year, said Town Manager Gary Huff.

The house was once the home of prominent Indianapolis attorney Addison Harris, who was a U.S. ambassador in 1996 from its original location at 96th Street and Allisonville Road to a town park near 106th Street and Elle

Despite fundraising efforts by local residents and preservationists, the house has sat vacant.

Pam Newell, the renovation project's coordinator, can't hide her excitement about the council's action.

The house, she said, needs to be preserved. "It gives us a connection with the world."

After restoration, there would be public tours of the house and special events. The wooden, 2 1/2-story building, a tea set and her textile collection, also may be displayed.

The house was built in the early 1830s, passed on to assorted owners and bought by Addison Harris in 1880.

After his death, the land went to India. She died in 1948, two months shy of her 100th birthday.

The property was donated to Indiana University, which sold part of the land for construction of a cemetery and sold for development.

Carol Ann Schweikert, a consultant on the renovation project, said the house was narrowly saved.

"The developers basically said move or lose it," she said.

To move it, the house had to be cut in half and transported roughly three miles to the new location. Schweiker

"It looked like a mother duck and her ducklings because it had the big front portion, and then the small L in the site overlooking White River.

A historic preservation committee kept the Ambassador House in the public eye. Grants were sought. A video

About a month ago, the Town Council took its step to renovate the house and plant the garden, which is expected

Council President Scott Faultless said he wants the Ambassador House site to be "something the whole town community with a rich history.

**Call Star reporter Richard D. Walton at (317) 444-6289.**

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