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Editorial: Centennial neighborhood steps up big

How much would you be willing to pony up to make your neighborhood better? A couple of hundred bucks maybe?

How about \$12,000-plus? That's some investment. That's also what 10 homeowners in the Centennial neighborhood are each doing on average to buy, raze and reuse a block's worth of vacant commercial property just north of downtown Lafayette.

No surprise here, really, that Centennial leaders are chipping in a third of the estimated \$380,000 price to buy and revitalize the former Midwest Rentals downtown site.

At the core of the Centennial Neighbors Investment Group LLC are long-time residents who helped cultivate brownstone and townhouse projects along Fifth Street a decade ago. They led the effort, after apartment buildings started cropping up around the neighborhood, to work with county planners to draw new zoning maps that favor single-family houses and other less dense uses. They have been through the ups and significantly more abundant downs of keeping up an older neighborhood fit, trim and vital.

But the investment in the neighborhood - and the investment in themselves - is no less remarkable just because these neighbors have done it before.

The destination for the block at Fifth and Brown streets: more owner-occupied housing.

The equal partners in this enterprise - the other two are the Lafayette Redevelopment Commission and the nonprofit Lafayette Urban Enterprise Association - have come up with an ingenious way to deal with castoff commercial property.

Can't wait to see the detailed plans.