



Panel to play role in shaping Centennial neighborhood's future

By **AMANDA HAMON** • ahamon@jconline.com • November 19, 2010

Phyllis and Michael O. Hunt have had a goal for years: better balance the number of Centennial neighborhood residents in rental properties with those in owner-occupied houses.

Now a master plan in works through the Tippecanoe County Area Plan Commission could help further that goal.

"The neighborhood wants to have a hand in what we think is the appropriate development and redevelopment of the neighborhood and not just leave it to chance," Michael O. Hunt, a member of the Historic Centennial Neighborhood Association's board of directors.

The comprehensive plan will influence zoning changes, development and redevelopment in the area. In June, the city council tasked the area plan commission with completing it.

It will cost up to \$50,000, financed equally by the plan commission and CityBus.

The Centennial neighborhood is an area bound by Union Street and Ferry Street, North Ninth Street and the Wabash River.

On Thursday night, representatives from all of the involved entities met with residents and worked to put together the project's steering committee.

Sallie Fahey, executive director of the Area Plan Commission, said once formed, the 20-member committee will meet up to six times as the plan is prepared. The committee also will serve as the primary conduit of information for the rest of the neighborhood.

"We hope to have very quick turnaround and have our first meeting in early December," Fahey said. "This process will be an evolution ... we will determine what your vision of the future is."

Ratio Architects will serve as consultants on the plan, and Lafayette native Ben Ross is the Ratio representative that will be working with the group.

Ross said the Centennial project is unique because of all of the different groups and people that are involved.

"All of these different groups have a lot of common goals," he said. "We want help them find solutions that will benefit all of the parties involved."

Fahey said the entire planning process may take up to a year to complete.

For Hunt, the plan comes at an appropriate time. He cited CityBus' plan for a nearby transfer station and Ivy Tech's potential expansion into downtown as evidence that the neighborhood soon will see some changes.

The Hunts also said the plan will help revitalize the area and encourage owner-occupied residency.

"When we came here, basically within a four-city-block area there were maybe two other homeowners, and that's really stretching it. Everything else was rental or commercial," he said.

Over the years, the balance of ownership has improved, the Hunts said. Continuing on that path and encouraging efforts such as historic preservation are important potential elements of the plan, Hunt said.

Ross is no stranger to historic preservation. One of his earliest efforts came when he was still attending Jefferson High School and led an unsuccessful effort to save the Britt horse farm from being swallowed by commercial development on Indiana 26 East.