

Old Davenport house moves to new home

City intends to rehabilitate and sell Gold Coast structure

By Alma Gaul

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Onlookers gathered Wednesday at Davenport's 8th and Ripley streets as a house-moving company carefully — very carefully — moved an old, three-bedroom house from the corner

of an alley on Ripley and drove it up 8th, easing the structure over a new foundation.

The operation began at 9 a.m. with police directing traffic and MidAmerican Energy Co. employees dropping and re-installing power lines. Then it dragged on until about 5 p.m. when the company called it quits with plans to finish today.

Perhaps the most breathtaking sight to onlookers in the early

going was when employees of Goodwin House Moving Inc. of Washington, Iowa, crouched under the house *as it was moving* to help steer by moving cables.

"You couldn't pay me enough money to do that," one onlooker said.

Although the house was on its new lot by 11 a.m., it took most of the day to wiggle it into position over the new foundation because

PROJECT COSTS

- New foundation, \$14,000
- Move and related costs, \$71,000
- Rehab at new site, \$61,000
- Total: \$146,000

Source: City of Davenport

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HOUSE

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of the mud. "It was hard to maneuver," project manager Chris Reighard said. With dry conditions, the move probably could have been finished in one day; because of the mud, crews likely won't be finished until noon today, he said.

The move was coordinated by the city of Davenport, which owns the house and expects to rehab it for resale. The reason it was moved rather than being rehabbed on-site is that residents of the historic Gold Coast neighborhood convinced the city council in September that 8th Street would be a better location.

First, the 8th Street lot is bigger, which will be more attractive to a potential buyer, and it is on higher ground, eliminating water problems that have plagued the house in its location at the bottom of an alley.

"The water would run down the alley and into the basement," area resident Jack Haberman said Wednesday, pointing to the sill on the home that had rotted on the alley side.

"We felt the house would never succeed in that location, given the drainage and the small lot," Haberman's wife, Marion Meginnis, added.

Second, moving the house to a vacant lot on 8th Street fills a gap that was created when another house was taken down, so "once again we will have a consistent streetscape," Meginnis said. "This is very important in older neighborhoods. Too many empty lots in a neighborhood begins to destroy the character of the original."

The circa-1900 house has no particular historical significance, but in a neighborhood that has lost 20 percent of its structures in the past 30 years, "every



Kevin E. Schmidt/QUAD-CITY TIMES

Onlookers watch as Goodwin House Moving Inc., Washington, Iowa, moves a more-than-a-century-old house Wednesday in Davenport.

MOVING A HOUSE

Moving a house is simple, really. All it takes is considerable skill and the right equipment. And time. It's not something that happens fast. You also have to move obstacles — electrical wires, overhead lights, traffic signs, trees and traffic — out of your way.

The house on Ripley Street was jacked up off its foundation and beams attached to sets of wheels were slid under it. The house was secured to the beams and then the whole works was hooked up, much like a wagon, to a powerful truck.

The movers also built cribbing in the basement of the house so that they would have a surface on which to drive the house out.

Putting the house back on a new foundation is a similar operation in reverse.

Rick Goodwin, owner of Goodwin House Moving Inc., characterized Wednesday's move as "not very difficult" in terms of distance — about a city block — and the size of the structure.

But mud became an issue in moving the house onto its new foundation and slowed work down considerably.

one is precious," she added.

The total cost of the move is about \$71,000, including Goodwin's fee and related expenses, such as payments to MidAmerican and Iowa American Water Co. to cut into the street to disconnect the water line, said Bruce Berger, the senior manager for development in the city's Community Planning and Economic Development Department.

In addition, city employees had to disconnect the sanitary sewer line.

The move is being paid for with money from the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program and the Iowa I-JOBS program, both

referred to as "stimulus" programs, Berger said.

The availability of this one-time outside money helped convince an otherwise-skeptical city council to go along with the move. If regular rehab funds had been at stake, the decision might have been different, he said.

Standing in the middle of 8th Street and watching his son-in-law direct the project, Rick Goodwin stressed that moving a house is the ultimate recycling.

"You'd need 100 new-growth trees to build a house like that," he said. "Plus, it keeps 40 to 50 tons of construction debris out

of a landfill. The city is doing a real good effort. We're pretty proud of that."

The city took possession of the home in 2009 after the owner defaulted on a combination rehab and mortgage provided by the city in 1995. The owner moved out, essentially abandoning the house, Berger said.

"That happens from time to time," he said. The city tried unsuccessfully to sell the property "as is" at a greatly reduced price, he added. Several low offers were made to acquire and rehab the home for rental use, but the original federal investment was for home ownership, he said.

Neighbors and the city council prefer ownership, too, he said.

Rehabbing abandoned houses generally takes nine to 12 months. After that, depending on market conditions, financing and client eligibility factors, the sale of the property can take anywhere from a month to a year.

"So, ideally, we would love to get a new homeowner in the house at 411 W. 8th around May 2012," Berger said.



Photos by Kevin E. Schmidt/QUAD-CITY TIMES

Rick Goodwin of Goodwin House Moving Inc., Washington, Iowa, directs relocation of a house Wednesday from 718 N. Ripley St. to a new site on 8th Street in Davenport. The structure was moved about 200 feet — 100 feet up Ripley and then turning and heading 100 feet up 8th Street. See video at qctimes.com.