

After years of neglect, Norman house eyesore is demolished

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A dilapidated and vandalized mansion on the edge of Flossmoor was finally demolished on Wednesday, Jan. 12, making way for a planned multi-family living development and a unique opportunity for local residents to invest in the property's future.

Known locally as the Norman House at 19020 Kedzie Ave., it once was owned by professional basketball player Ken Norman, who built the home around another structure in 1989.

Norman made his name at the University of Illinois. He was drafted by the Los Angeles Clippers in 1987 and went on to a 10-year NBA career. He played for the Clippers until 1993, and then was on the Milwaukee Bucks roster for a year. He played on the Atlanta Hawks team from 1994 to 1997.

Norman left the home sometime in the early 2000s, and it continued to fall into disrepair. It was purchased in 2018 by a real estate investment group. That group's representative, Randy Pertler, said that razing the house makes way for new construction.

"We know it's been an eyesore for a long time, and now it can be a crown jewel," Pertler said.

With its boxy design and concrete facade, the house was built by Norman and lived in for nearly a decade until the early 2000s, when it seems he lost legal possession of it. The two-story showed wear and tear from weather and vandalism. Most recently, passersby could easily spot missing chunks and graffiti tags.

The property is technically part of unincorporated Cook County, though its neighbors – CVS Pharmacy and Coyote Run Golf Course – both lie in Flossmoor. It is not connected to Flossmoor's water and sewer systems, nor is it covered by village services such as fire and police.

If all goes according to plan, Pertler said the 88,000-square-foot piece of land will be annexed into the village of Flossmoor. A few administrative hurdles exist, giving Pertler mixed



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The mansion built by former NBA player Ken Norman was demolished on Wednesday, Jan. 12, after standing as an eyesore near the intersection of Flossmoor Road and Kedzie Avenue.

emotions as the building was finally being bulldozed.

"I feel relieved, but also kind of nervous about the next step," he said. "Our plan will require a couple minor (zoning) variances from what Flossmoor right now allows. So we're hoping we can work with them, and it's a win-win for the community."

Pertler made a failed attempt at annexation in October 2019, but this time he has support from Flossmoor May-

or Michelle Nelson after spending the last year working with her and village staff toward the goal.

Nelson said one of her priorities upon getting elected in April 2021 was figuring out the quickest and safest possible way to remove the building and considering what could be put in its place.

She credited 6th District Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller with helping her push along the process,



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Randy Pertler, left, representative for the property owners group, and Amy Kent, Flossmoor communications coordinator, chat while a crew from Cachey Construction demolishes the Ken Norman house on Kedzie Avenue.

and Nelson said the village has a good working relationship with Pertler.

"Randy's great. He is extremely responsive and caring," said Nelson, who is a professional civil engineer. "The unsafe condition of the property has been a concern of mine and everyone who lives in Flossmoor for a very long time. Not just the safety, but how it reflects on Flossmoor."

TJ Cachey Builders is attached as developer for the proposed \$6 million project, which Pertler said could break ground as early as the spring season. To raise capital for the project, Pertler said he will combine a majority of bank loans with a portion of real estate crowdfunding.

Similar to crowdfunding for small businesses, inventions and other projects, real estate crowdfunding allows individuals to invest a relatively small amount of money into buying or developing real estate.

Pertler said a person could become a part owner in the Flossmoor project for an investment of \$500 to \$2,500, which is the limit for this type of investing.

"If it goes bad, you're not going to be losing your life savings. But think about if you had \$2,500 of Apple stock or Google stock at the beginning," Pertler said.

"Of course, we're not claiming anyone's going to get rich with this, but it's something they can take pride in, and have a sense of ownership. You could drive by and see how your investment is doing."

Involvement will be open to qualified individual investors across the country, Pertler said.

Nelson also said she has mixed emotions about the demolition. She looks forward to new residents enjoying the property but said she can't help but feel sorry for the loss of Norman's former home.

"In a way it's kind of sad because we're taking down someone's dream, and Kenny Norman worked really hard for that dream," Nelson said.

"When he woke up in the morning, Kenny had some of the best views in all of Flossmoor – looking out at Coyote Run. One thing I'm really happy about is that (the property) will be put to a use that will allow a lot more people to enjoy those views."

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