

By Ed Farrell

The Winchester Star

winchester — After seven months of hard work, and a bit more money than he expected, Daniel McKee was all smiles as he invited selected guests to see his work at 501-503 S. Kent St. on Thursday.

The properties are two of several donated to the Robert. E. Rose Memorial Foundation by Vivienne Jackson, and will soon be her temporary home.

Jackson, whose lifelong residence at 126-128 E. Cecil St. was recently approved for demolition by the city's Board of Architectural Review, will soon move into the refurbished twobedroom unit at 501 S. Kent. The unit at 503 S. Kent was kept in its original three-bedroom layout.

But virtually everything else is new.

McKee, operations manager for **Kee Construction** Services, called the project “basically a total renovation. Everything was completely gutted. Several walls were relocated and all the infrastructure — the plumbing, electricity, heating and air — is brand-new. We put in new insulation as well.”

McKee would not disclose the total cost of the project, but estimated it at roughly \$100 per square foot. He declines to provide the square footage of the site.

Because he followed the “like for like” rehabilitation model, McKee did not need to receive BAR approval for the project as a whole.

He did, however, have to seek approvals for other items, such as the exterior paint, and to be able to hang seamless gutters, which the original structure lacked.

“It's just beautiful,” said Cathy Shore, a BAR member who toured the homes on Thursday. “I think they did a fantastic job. This building has now become a real asset for this street.”

Winning Shore's approval is critical; five nearby properties, also owned by the Rose Foundation, will once again be on the BAR's agenda at 4 p.m. next Thursday.

The project was twice tabled by the BAR to allow the foundation and Preservation of Historic Winchester, which opposes the demolition of the homes at 406-414 S. Kent, to negotiate.

PHW members have publicly stated that they believe some of the houses in question can, like the 501-503 S. Kent duplex, be rehabilitated.

On Thursday, however, project architect Donald Crigler said the negotiations with PHW had faltered.

“They made the Rose Foundation a counter-offer, which was not acceptable,” he said.

“So [next] Thursday we will be asking for approval for demolition of all five properties.”

McKee said his company is under contract to do the necessary work on the remaining properties: “Whatever it is decided, we’ll be allowed to do.”

McKee said the next step is likely the razing of the small home at 507 S. Kent. After that will be the demolition of Jackson’s former home, also the location of the former Ruth’s Tea Room. Jackson said she was pleased with the rehabilitation.

“You just wouldn’t believe how bad of shape this building was in,” she said while opening and closing the new cabinets in the kitchen.

Also on display were a new range, microwave oven, and dishwasher.

Furniture filled the rooms, which featured the original hardwood floors, and beds had been placed in each of the three upstairs bedrooms.

“This is just like someone came in with a magic wand,” Jackson said. “They just did a wonderful job.”

Just as pleased was Mayor Elizabeth A. Minor: “I am really very impressed, and I think this is just one of many to come. This just goes to show what can be done here, and what we’re trying to do.”

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