

East Sider hopes others can fix up their old homes

By CHARLES FRANCIS
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Proponents of expanding Charleston's Old and Historic District to the city's East Side say it will be an incentive for property owners to upgrade their property.

But Leroy Dubose, who owns and recently renovated his house at 12 Amherst St., said people don't need to be in the district to have pride in their homes.

Dubose considers himself lucky to be able to take care of his house. "Many East Side residents who live in unkempt houses don't have the money to renovate or repair them," he said. "People here have just as much pride in their homes and community as anyone else."

It took four months to replace the roof, the porch, part of the foundation and refurbish the interior, Dubose said. Now, he walks around the house with a paint brush or screwdriver in his hand, adding the finishing touches.

"Working around the house is now a hobby for me," said the retired postal executive. "I can start and stop when I want to, unless my wife, Edna, sees something that has to be done."

Dubose renovated his home under the city's Urban Housing Program, as have several other homeowners in the neighborhood.

There are many people on the East Side who would like to renovate their homes, he said, but don't

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qualify for any city programs.

"I've taken a step to make sure this house will always be in the family," he said. "I've stipulated in my will that my children can never sell this house."

Dubose said his parents, Joseph and Anna Belle Dubose, purchased the house in 1937 and lived there for more than 50 years.

"My parents worked hard to pay for this house and this house is part of my life," he said. "I have many fond memories of growing up in this house and this neighborhood."

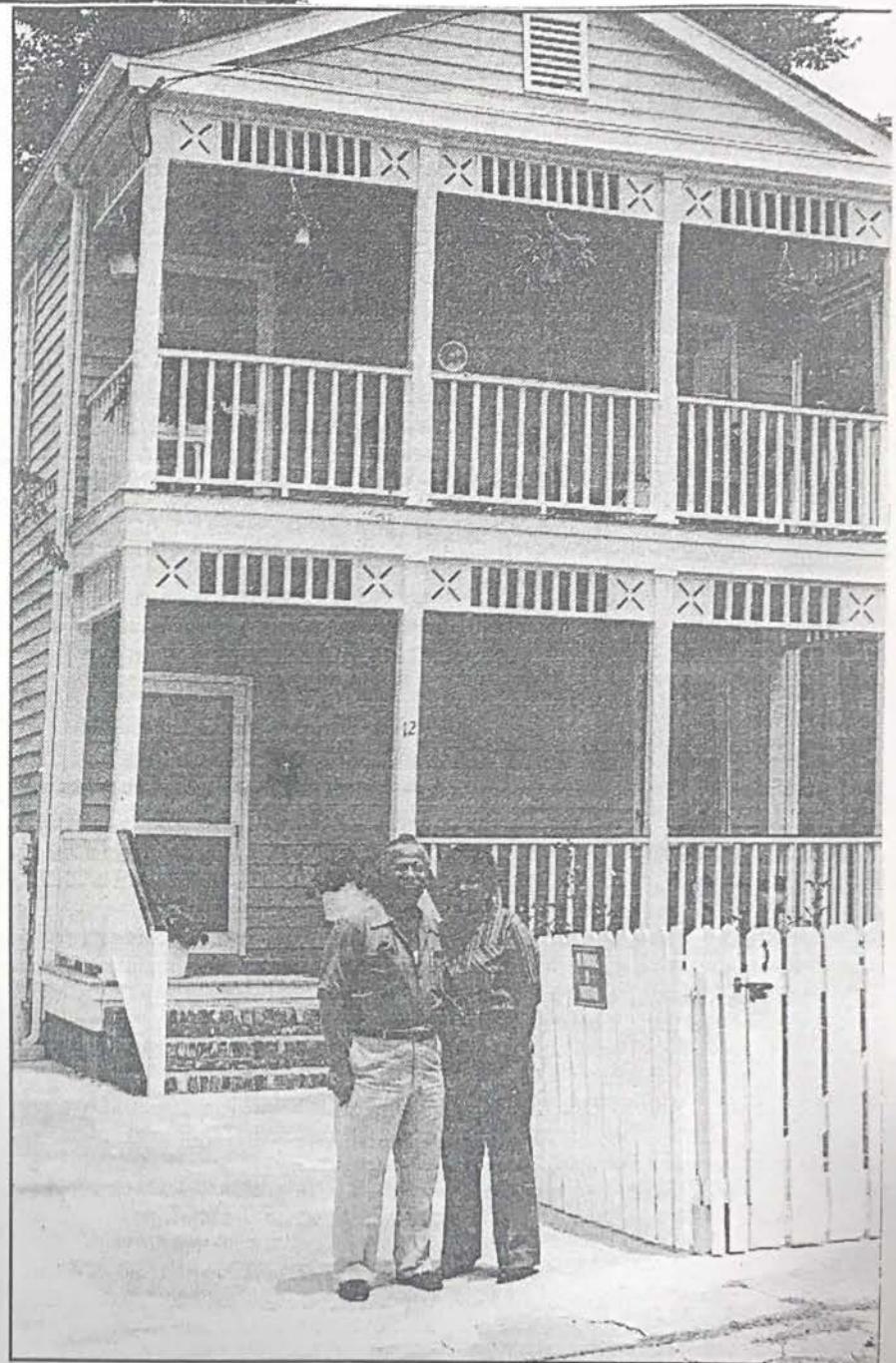
He recalls walking with his young friends to the end of the pier at the east end of Columbus Street, where sailors on merchant ships gave them bananas and cigarettes.

"That's when I started smoking," he said.

Dubose said East Side residents aren't afraid of white families moving into the neighborhood, but they are afraid they won't be able to afford to live here if the proposed extension is approved.

"People here don't care about the color of their neighbor's skin," he said. "They just want to continue to live in the homes they've lived in for the past 20, 30, 40 or even 50 years."

Jerry L. Rogers, the keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, said he will approve or deny the proposed extension on July 5.



Staff Photo by Charles Francis
Dubose and wife, Edna, in front of East Side home.