

 Michigan Car Accident Personal Injury Attorney

Character Inn may breathe new life with students

Oregon developer sees potential for student housing

 **By Joel Feick**

FLINT (WJRT) - (07/06/07)--Genesee County's largest vacant hotel may be coming back to life as student housing.

A developer from Oregon is in negotiations to buy Flint's downtown Riverfront Character Inn. But a plan to turn it back into a hotel has derailed.

Although it's been vacant for about a year, the lights are on and the fish in the fish tank are still being fed in the old Character Inn.

It's owner, the Institute of Basic Life Principals, moved everybody but the caretaker and his family out when a deal to sell it appeared imminent. That deal fell through.

And now a plan to turn it back into a hotel hasn't materialized. But Oregon developer Dale Bernards reportedly has a new plan to turn into student housing for the U of M Flint.

"Well it seems to me there would be enough room for some student housing and still be able to do some of the larger events that the city needs. This space (could be used) for maybe some rooms to rent, that type of thing," said Ken Karuse.

The head of the Genesee County Land Bank says he's talked to Bernards about the deal and he feels privately owned collegiate housing is the best use for the facility.

"What I've suggested is that that development be more like what's happening in our Universities around the country, private development of student housing, where the developer takes the risk," said the Land Bank's Dan Kildee.

Kildee is also working on a plan to turn the old Durant Hotel into student housing while the University of Michigan-Flint breaks ground on its own 300-bed facility in 10 days.

"We have a great brand here that we haven't sold very well," Kildee said. "That's a branch of the University of Michigan, one of the finest universities in the world."

Kildee says for the deal to work it would need U of M-Flint's blessing, not its money. U of M-Flint officials and developer Bernards were unavailable to comment Friday.

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