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Bing House Takes Step Toward Historic Status

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ROOMING HOUSE HAS TIES TO BLACK HISTORY

PLANT CITY - The Florida National Register Review Board agreed this week to forward an application to Washington that would pronounce the Bing Rooming House historically significant.

The review board is an arm of the secretary of state's office.

The Bing House is the only remaining rooming house in Plant City that catered to blacks during the segregation era.

"I may not know anything for one or two months," said James Washington, who grew up in the house.

Washington attended the review board meeting in Tallahassee on Tuesday. "I think it went pretty well."

Located at 205 Allen St., the house that once provided a home away from home for black professionals is surrounded by vacant lots where lucrative businesses once stood.

Washington said he wants to protect its history.

His grandmother, Jamie Wheeler Bing, built the rooming house and ran it along with a restaurant from the 1920s until she retired in the 1970s.

Now he wants to restore the house and turn part of it into a museum of local black history while continuing to live there.

Washington deeded the house to the Improvement League of Plant City with the stipulation that he be allowed to live there until his death.

By turning the house over to a nonprofit agency, that agency can apply for grant money to help restore the house. And grant money could be easier to get if the house is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

William Thomas, a member of the Improvement League board, has applied for a grant through the secretary of state's Front Porch Initiative.



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to write the application for the National Register.

City Commissioner Randy Larson, who is committed to historic restoration in Plant City, is the managing principal of the PBS&J Tampa office.

He called Tuesday's decision good news.

"It continues the momentum of rebuilding our more mature neighborhoods," Larson said.

"I've found that the Improvement League has considerable resolve," he said. "I believe they will see this through."

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