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Pitts: 'Makeover' a 'surreal' experience for neighbors

Myron B. Pitts

On Friday, a big excavator kicked up dust as it moved around the remains of a crumpled house on Langdon Street.

By this Thursday, a new home is supposed to rise in its place - a modernized structure with a log cabin feel - tucked in between a row of modest homes.

This is the home being made over for ABC's hit show, "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," and next-door neighbor Carolyn Chambers has seen it all - and heard it all.

She sat on her porch and watched busy workers assemble a large tent that swallowed up her front yard. They took 15 minutes.

Since the project started Thursday, Chambers' yard and driveway have been used frequently as a staging area for workers, who keep going overnight. She said she didn't get to sleep until 3 but said most of the heavy noise was done by 1, and she did not think the noise had kept her from sleeping.

She called the whole thing "surreal," but added, "it's going to be an asset to the neighborhood. People are going to want to come by and see it. I think it's going to be great."

Chambers retired four years ago from a position as data manager for Cumberland County schools. She shares the home with her grandson, Ramik Watkins, who is 21.

Watkins, who is studying to be a cosmetologist, said the positivity of the project next door might give him inspiration for the "abstract" music he writes and performs under the stage name Kimar Flows.

"It'll add some flavor to the neighborhood," he said.

Looking up and down the busy activity on once-quiet Langdon Street, one finds it hard to argue with their optimism.

"Extreme Makeover" will put a national beam on a part of the city that does not always get positive attention. Langdon connects Ramsey Street and Murchison Road, with Ramsey Street Alternative School on one end and Fayetteville State University on the other.

A worthy endeavor will also be recognized. The home being replaced is owned by Barbara Summey Marshall, a Navy veteran who takes in homeless veterans as part of her program Steps N Stages. The show's producers sent the house's occupants to Disney World in Orlando, Fla., while their new home is being built.

Chambers knew about Marshall's work and knows her neighbors. She describes herself as a big supporter of what Marshall is doing because her own son is a retired Navy veteran.

"They seem to be very nice," she said about the women in Steps N Stages.

She said one of the women is out most mornings, cleaning up the yard, picking up any litter or sweeping.

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Chambers was one of the few residents in the city who had some advance notice before "Extreme Makeover" host Ty Pennington knocked on Marshall's door.

Producers visited her a week prior and told her Marshall's home was one of five finalists.

A frequent watcher of the show, Chambers said she was excited.

"I can be as accommodating as possible," she said about the busy work next door. "It's part of being a good neighbor."

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