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## Clara Verner Tower to get renovation

By Jason Morton  
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | Clara Verner Tower resident Peggy Miller was pleased to hear the detailed renovation plans for the apartment building she's called home for almost 13 years.

"We've been watching this place slowly crumble around us," said Miller, 63.

On Thursday, developer Stan Pate stood before about 200 residents, their relatives and several area leaders to announce his plans to renovate Clara Verner Tower, which he purchased last fall from the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, a division of the Alabama State Board of Missions.

Pate paid about \$1.8 million for the building and said he's investing

more than \$9 million to renovate every apartment on its 13 floors, fix the sprinkler system, expand the laundry room and improve the main floor common areas, among other upgrades.

"When I look at you," Pate told the group crammed into the building's rec room, "I see my grandmother and what might've been my grandfather. That puts a very, very high standard on this project."

Renovations have already begun on the main and second floors. Once the second floor apartments are finished, residents of the top three floors will be moved down to the second so work can begin at the top. The shuffling will continue, three floors at a time with tenants moving into the newly-refurbished spaces, until the renovations are complete.

Robert Amason, owner of Amason & Associates, the contractor hired to oversee the building's rehabilitation, said all work should be complete by early 2009.

Pate's plans also call for renovating the entire exterior of the structure, realigning the parking lot and enclosing the main entryway.

Renderings on display indicate a secondary entryway. Residents were also given a chance to vote on one of three interior color schemes.

"You're going to live here every day, and I'm going to come visit some," Pate said. "So it's very important for you to have some input on how it's going to look."

Pate got involved with Clara Verner Tower in January 2006 after learning

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its residents could lose their homes if the building's sprinkler system was not replaced. Pate went to the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers to offer financial assistance and wound up being offered the building.

Resident Dan Turnipseed, who volunteered as a fire spotter for Clara Verner Tower before moving in, said he liked what Pate was planning to do with the building. Turnipseed has lived there for three years.

"We appreciate it and everything he's going to do," said Turnipseed, 63. "I'm sure it'll be much more comfortable."



STAFF PHOTO | MICHAEL E. PALMER

Stan Pate speaks to Clara Verner Tower residents about the renovation of the building Thursday February 7, 2008 at Clara Verner Tower.