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Home at 1265 River Drive in Des Plaines undergoing re-construction this week to be physically raised above river levels. (Journal Photo)

Rising Above

2 Homes Along River Being Re-Built To Avoid Flooding

By TODD WESSELL Journal & Topics Editor

Construction work on two local houses, situated only feet away from the Des Plaines River, may lead the way in dealing with the frequent, devastating effects of flooding.

The two houses--1265 River Dr. and 1900 Berry Ln.---are in the process of being totally rebuilt and elevated above the ground in order to allow water from the nearby river to flow freely underneath the living areas thus safeguarding the property.

They are the first known homes in Des Plaines built that way and could lead to similar efforts in the future.

River Drive and Berry Lane, located east of River Road south of Algonquin Road, are in neighborhoods that have flooded many times over the years. The Des Plaines River flows by only a short distance to the east. The area is located just south of the Methodist Campground.

According city of Des Plaines building inspector Al Biancalana, plans for the River Drive home call for the living area to be extended about 8-ft. above the concrete foundation giving the appearance that the house is two-stories tall. In reality, the first level will be a giant crawl space, said Biancalana. Demolition of the Berry home will probably take place within days. Plans there call for the house to be elevated three to four feet above ground.

"This will take the houses out of flood's danger. These homes will not flood anymore," said Biancalana.

When the Des Plaines River overflows its banks, water will flow under the homes through the new crawlspaces thus avoiding any serious, expensive damage.

"This is the first time this is being done in Des Plaines," Biancalana said. "If all homes in the flood plain are elevated, it greatly reduces the damage the river can do. There's only so much we can do with Mother Nature."

The two homes' garages will remain at ground level.

Mayor Marty Moylan said this week that members of the city's Building Code Committee may soon review the situation involving the two houses and decide whether to eliminate or reduce the property owners' building permit fees.