

Grants rehabilitate substandard Bryan housing

By STEVE MAYER
Special to The Battalion
Hesitation. Hope the porch holds. A wall is supported by timbers. Wires dangle from the ceiling. God, the smell. No wonder — refrigerator's unplugged. Roaches explore sawdust from freshly cut window frames. A carpenter curses one of the frames.

This deteriorated northeast Bryan house is owned by a crippled black man in his 80's. It's one of 1,459 substandard housing units in Brazos County, according to a survey last year by the Brazos Valley Development Council. Bryan had 1,177 substandard units and 84 dilapidated. College Station had 198 substandard and none dilapidated. Substandard

means at least one of these conditions exist — structural damage, inadequate electricity or inadequate plumbing, according to explained John Emerson, BVDC regional planner. A dilapidated structure isn't suitable for habitation, he said. The old crippled black man doesn't know much about surveys, urban renewal and city planning. Nor does he know about the great amount of work and the problems involved. However, he does know that he will survive the winter months better. His house is being rehabilitated with a new roof, window frames, paint and pest extermination — at no cost for him.

It's done through the federally funded Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The Bryan city planner's office handles federal lending, local lending and grants established by the act. It is the same program which HUD recently terminated with College Station because of the city's failure to provide assistance in low cost rental housing.

The grant program is the most popular with Bryan residents, said Elisa Eubank, Bryan community development planner. Thus far, almost 100 applicants have or will receive health, safety and winterization work on their houses. Applicants must live in certain Bryan districts, own their house, and earnings must be below poverty level, Eubank said.



With cold weather here, rehabilitation for this Bryan house on E. 20th St. is just in time. Aged and poor in certain sec-

tions of Bryan can receive up to \$5,000 in repairs through the Bryan Community Development Program.

The program is making progress, and governmental efforts seem to be Brazos County's only available means to combat urban blight.

Private efforts in Brazos County are virtually nonexistent, said John Sindt, associate research economist for the Texas Real Estate Research Center. "You really need to buy an entire block in order to change the character of the neighborhood and achieve some economies of scale," he said. "If a developer buys and repairs a single home, what then does he have that the city

inner city housing hasn't reached this point.

With little or no demand for Brazos County land occupied by deteriorated structures, the

applicants a week, as the winter months approach. But it could be cold winter for those who don't apply well before winter.

York City is a model associated with the program. Eubank said.

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