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Former motel could house ex-prisoners

Corrections department also would move offices to old Quality Inn.

*By Kevin Leininger
of The News-Sentinel*

A closed north-side motel is being eyed as a possible home for newly released prisoners.

The Allen County Commissioners on Friday are expected to consider a proposal under which the county's Community Corrections department would move into the former Quality Inn at 3330 W. Coliseum Blvd. from its downtown location at 201 W. Superior St.

Allen County Superior Judge John Surbeck, a Community Corrections Board member, said the department has received a state grant of about \$700,000 which would be applied to the project, which he said "is not a done deal." Surbeck said local businessman Jerry Henry would buy the property from its current owner, Orite Hotels, then lease it to the department, which provides a variety of programs for offenders.

In addition to transitional housing for county residents recently released from prison – an estimated 400 per year – the building would also house offices and, possibly, a work-release program now operated by the Sheriff's Department.

The hotel has previously been among the county's largest tax-delinquent properties, owing more than \$90,000 last year, but County Treasurer Sue Orth said all taxes are currently paid.

If the project goes ahead, it would cap a nearly two-year search for transitional housing, Surbeck said. Last year the county considered the hotel and other sites, but ultimately backed off because of a lack of funding.

The hotel is in a mostly industrial area and "is ideal for our needs," Surbeck said.

At one time, the current Community Corrections building was being considered as a new home for the Sheriff's Department, but officials are also considering plans for a new facility on Adams Center Road and a possible co-location with the Fort Wayne Police at either the City-County Building or the Renaissance Square building on East Berry Street, which the city is buying.