

The Bedford Pound Ridge

RECORD REVIEW

By EVE MARX

A three-story Victorian structure, believed to have been moved from Old Katonah, is now the latest acquisition and success story for A-HOME, an affordable rental-housing agency serving northern Westchester.

Joan Arnold, A-HOME's director, said, "I lived in Katonah for a time, and this house was always fascinating. It's a really cool house, and it's always been on my list of houses to reclaim."

The imposing residence, located at the highest point on Wildwood Road, commands one of the most awe-inspiring views of the village. Believed to have been first a private residence and then a boarding house before it was moved around 1870, the house most recently was owned by Jeff Burdick, who sold it to A-HOME. Ms. Arnold said that, architecturally, the house reminds her of the Chapman House on The Terrace, which was moved from Old Katonah probably around the same time, prior to the building of the New York City reservoirs. It has high ceilings and beautiful moldings, Ms. Arnold said, adding that she would love to live there. "It's a beautiful house and a fabulous location. My theory is that when they were moving the houses, that house took a wrong turn and went up the hill. All the others are down the hill."

The Wildwood Road house currently contains seven rental units, all studios and one-bedroom apartments. A-HOME, Ms. Arnold said, had been interested in acquiring the property for about two years. It was a lengthy process, as A-HOME had been engaged in trying to access state funds to help cover the purchase.

"We ended up purchasing it with a bridge loan from Leviticus Alternative Fund," she said. The fund is a social lending fund that uses federal funds. "We were able to extend this money from the stimulus fund," Ms. Arnold said. "Thanks to President Obama, on Sept. 25, we were able to take owner-ship."

Ms. Arnold said the house is nearly fully rented and that right now there, is only one vacancy. "Until we get the money from the state, which first has to get money from the county, we won't be able get new home land acquisition funds," she said. "We can then repay the bridge loan, and then it becomes possible to lower the rents so it becomes truly affordable. And that money will also enable us to do the necessary renovations."

These renovations include an energy audit and an upgrade of the heating system and replacing some windows.

"We also want to put in better siding to make the house more energy efficient, and replace the fascia and the soffits," Ms. Arnold said. The roof is also slated to be replaced "We want to make it a tighter, more energy-efficient building."

Renowned Madison, Conn.-based architect Duo Dickinson has also been on board with the renovations. Ms. Arnold said one of the things the town requested was a historically correct replacement of the porches.

"I have worked with A-HOME for over 20 years in 10 towns on about 20 projects - about a third are built, a third are in process and a third fell victim to the vagaries of that process," Mr. Dickinson said. "My practice as an architect is

mostly residential, but has always had a significant percentage of pro-bono work for not-for-profits at its core. We have-designed and have built light rehabs, full renovations/additions and new buildings for A-HOME in Vista, Mount Kisco, Thornwood, Pound Ridge, Bedford Hills, Katonah Chappaqua and Croton Falls. We are presently working in Briarcliff, Lewisboro and several other towns."

Mr. Dickinson said he personally visits the site of every project. "I saw this one a couple of times and sent an associate there to look at the porch. Our new design simply reuses a rehabbed foundation and plays off the gist of the existing building," he said.

"A-HOME is an extraordinary organization," Mr. Dickinson added. "It is responsive to the towns they create homes in, thoughtful in adapting need to structure and dogged in the knowledge that there is a never-ending need to provide housing for a variety of people who need a variety of support mechanisms. Its executive director, Joan Arnold, is one of my heroes."

"Usually our properties are for senior or disabled people, but this place is open to anyone as long as they can pay the rent," Ms. Arnold said.

She said rents reflect Section 8 guidelines, which are fair-market rentals. The rent will be approximately \$1,140 for a one-bedroom and \$900 for a studio. Applicants' income must not exceed 60 percent of area median income.

In the fall of 2009 A-HOME completed construction on 12 apartments for older adults in Pound Ridge. A-HOME is on the move. As of the first week of December, the offices will

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be located at 141 Tompkins Ave., Pleasantville, on the third floor. "We found a great new space with lots of windows, and we're paying less rent," Ms. Arnold said.

"This is a wonderful new space for us," Ms. Arnold said. "It was a printing press at one point, and I think maybe a Con Ed substation. Diamond Properties owns the building, and they've done a great job renovating it for us. They did the build-out, and John Sullivan worked on the design."

Call 666-0740 for more information about the Wildwood Road residence, or visit A-HOME at www.a-homehousing.org.

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