

'Green' acres: the Manor House may get ecofriendly neighbors.

By Jenny Kincaid Boone
September 6, 2007



NEW: Icon Development LLC spent \$1.3 million last month to buy the seven-acre parcel around the Manor House. The plan is to create an environmentally sustainable community.



Stephanie Klein-Davis | The Roanoke Times

OLD: The vacant Manor House, built in 1948, was the focus of a building moratorium intended to protect the Southwest Roanoke structure. The moratorium expires in six years.

The area's newest "green" community may land on coveted property that already boasts a nine-bedroom mansion.

The Manor House, one of Southwest Roanoke's largest homes, may eventually be surrounded by new houses and condominiums that will make up an environmentally sustainable community.

For \$1.3 million, Icon Development LLC bought this seven-acre parcel last month from Retirement Community Inc., which is under Friendship Foundation, a local retirement community that developed the first phase of three gated communities in the Southwood area. These communities sit below the Manor House property, off of Duke of Gloucester Street near a Kmart.

Developers have eyed the sprawling and vacant Manor House, built in 1948, and its adjacent land for years.

But there have been limits on what developers could do with the house because of a building moratorium. The restriction was imposed after a Southwood homeowner filed a lawsuit arguing against having the house torn down for further home construction. There are six more years left on the moratorium.

Icon's three-person team plans homes based on EarthCraft House standards. EarthCraft is a "green" building program based in Atlanta that promotes homes that protect the environment and reduce bills.

Icon is working on another EarthCraft development of seven houses, called Madison Field, in Roanoke at Brambleton Avenue and Overland Road. Other EarthCraft subdivisions are going up in the Roanoke Valley, including one called The Preserve at Two Ford in Southwest Roanoke County.

Icon chose the Southwood section of Roanoke because of its beauty. The top of the Manor House hill reveals stunning views of South Roanoke and the surrounding mountains.

"It's probably one of the best viewsheds left in Roanoke city," said Veronica Van Deventer, one of Icon's partners.

Icon has named this new community Queen Anne Court of Southwood, after Queen Anne of England and Ireland. Its plans involve building nine one-level houses along one side of the property.

They would fit the architectural style of the Manor House, which combines elements from a Monticello and Mount Vernon look, Van Deventer said. Ideally, construction would begin this fall on these houses, she added.

And prices would start at \$750,000 for each.

Additionally, a 12-unit condo complex would go up across the back side of the property. Condo prices would begin at \$480,000.

The Manor House with its brick facade, Williamsburg-blue shutters and large white columns, will remain, though plans for its future still are up in the air.

Icon, which does not intend to tear the house down after 2013, is marketing it as a single family dwelling with a price tag of \$850,000. At least one potential buyer is interested in it.

If the mansion doesn't sell, it will be divided into condos, Van Deventer said.

A covered walkway and gazebo adjoining one side of the Manor House will be relocated to another section of the property. The gazebo would be used as a community gathering spot.

Icon also proposes creating a large grassy area in the middle of the community as a common area for residents.

This green area would be used for storm water drainage. A single road would be built to encircle the subdivision.

Other EarthCraft home features involve using compact fluorescent lighting and energy-saving appliances in houses.

All waste from construction would be chipped, ground and recycled on site. The houses would be situated to use natural heating and cooling effects from the sun.

Plans for the condo unit call for a specially engineered roof that reduces the temperature of the rooftop and allows residents to cut back on the use of air conditioning.

And Icon plans to save or relocate many trees and shrubs on the property.

Nearby homeowners learned of Icon's plans during a neighborhood meeting several months ago. Icon recently submitted its comprehensive site plan to city of Roanoke, though it has not yet been approved.

Curtis Mills, president of the Southwood of Roanoke neighborhood association, said most residents of the Southwood communities realize that development at the Manor House site is imminent.

"Everybody's preference would be for it to remain as it is," he said. But he said he hasn't heard opposition to Icon's plans.

Mills said he wants the quality of the houses planned there to be "in keeping with the area."

Icon predicts neighbors will be pleased with what is to come.

Van Deventer described the new houses as "extremely luxurious" with a hint of historical flair.