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## Syracuse group hopes to restore East Genesee Street home that's been vacant for 20 years

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By



David Lassman / The Post-Standard

University Neighborhood Preservation Association has purchased the long vacant Babcock-Shattuck house at 2004 E. Genesee St., Syracuse. It has plans to stabilize the building and eventually build make four large condominiums in the building.

It looks as if there's still hope for the eyesore at 2004 E. Genesee and Westcott streets.

The old house – it's been there more than a century – has been vacant more than 20 years. It's called the Babcock-Shattuck house after it's earliest owners, Dr. Archer Babcock, a prominent Syracuse surgeon and Frank Shattuck, one of the brothers who founded Schrafft's restaurants, a New York City-based chain that for decades offered home-style food.

The newest savior for Babcock-Shattuck is University Neighborhood Preservation Association (UNPA), a non-profit group which aims to help

people buy homes in the area east of Syracuse University.

One of the group's board members, and a former city official, David Michel, said the group has purchased the house from the city and is good to go on rehabilitation, with the help of Home Headquarters, a non-profit development group. The project has a price tag of \$1.1 million and aims to convert the house into four large condominium units.

Dave Michel said work on the building's exterior will begin this summer.

UNPA said the condo conversion will provide a new type of home ownership for the neighborhood, where the house is an anchor. The group has received a loan commitment from the Preservation League of New York State and a grant commitment from the state Environmental Protection Fund program. It is awaiting word on a \$8,500 grant for landscaping from the Central New York Community Foundation.

Right now, UNPA describes the site as "a blight on the neighborhood."

In recent years, the building is best known as home to the Jewish War Veterans Post 131. The post occupied it more than four decades, finally selling the house in 1989 and moving to a new headquarters in DeWitt.

Preservationist Sam Gruber, a consultant to the UNPA board, has written a history of the house for its website. After the veterans left, he says the house was owned by buyers who proposed using it as a group home for the disabled. Another owner wanted to open a restaurant. Once it was sold at public auction to a developer of local Rite Aid pharmacies.

A permit to demolish the house was denied by the city because it was eligible for National Landmark Register status. It later achieved that honor.

The house was built around 1895 as a residence-office for Archer Babcock. Sam Gruber called the Queen Anne Revival-style building "an important reminder of the prosperity that this part of the city once enjoyed." He mentioned its strategic placement as "an essential visual anchor for the entire neighborhood."

In 1997, a community group called Eastside Neighbors in Partnership bought the house with a plan to make it into an arts and technology center. The partnership disbanded in 2006, leaving behind a string of unpaid bills and debts.

Dave Michel said UNPA and Home Headquarters plan to finish the exterior and one apartment as a model, then seek individual buyers. It would finance the rest of the construction through residential tax credits or find a developer to finish the units.

Paul Driscoll, the city's commissioner of neighborhood and business development, is quoted as saying the project is not a slam dunk. "There's an element of risk," he explained.

Dave Michel said the old house has good bones. "We're excited by this," he said of the UNPA plans.

Cheers to Marissa.ý/(Z);þ

The Cases spent an enjoyable Sunday night this past weekend at a cabaret performance by Marissa Mulder, a young singer returning to her hometown for a revue of the songs of a fellow Syracusan, composer Jimmy Van Heusen. Marissa is the daughter of my Post-Standard colleagues, Mary Beth and Jim Mulder.

We were impressed by Marissa's strong, beautiful voice. Too bad Jimmy VanHeusen missed the show.

The cabaret was presented by Central New York Jazz. We hope they ask Marissa back.

Meanwhile, is there a Broadway role in your future, Marissa?

Ironclad modelý/(Z);þ

The proud in-laws of the model maker have stepped up to identify him as Colan Ratliff, builder of the model of the

USS Onondaga, the Civil War ironclad we ran a picture of in The Post-Standard last week. The Forgers of Solvay dropped me a note about Colan. He works at the David Taylor Research at Bethesda, Md.

The model's in the collection at Onondaga Historical Association.

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