

Gustav Stickley House to be transformed into inn, event space



Lukas Halloran | Staff Photographer

Over \$700,000 had been secured for the implementation of phase one of the reconstruction of the Gustav Stickley House, through two separate grants.

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Despite the raccoon trap in one of the kitchens, the putrid smell and the leaves scattered on the floor, David Rudd's eyes light up as he enters the Gustav Stickley House early on a Wednesday morning.

Rudd, the president of the recently-formed Gustav Stickley House Foundation, walks room by room through the house that's been vacant for nearly 20 years. He ignores the debris that litters the floor as he describes what he hopes the home will transform into in the near future.

In 1902, world-famous designer Gustav Stickley crafted the interior of the house using the Arts and Crafts style, which features floors with open spaces rather than small, distinct rooms typical of homes built during that time period. The house was the first of its kind to use that style and is significant to the development of American design history, according to the foundation's website.



WHO IS GUSTAV STICKLEY?

Stickley is an **American furniture designer and publisher** credited for bringing the Arts and Craft architectural style to the United States. This movement, which combines **simple elements and folksy designs**, was a popular style throughout the early 20th century.

ARTS & CRAFTS

The Arts & Crafts movement was first used in the United States by Gustav Stickley during the early 1900s. Homes built using Arts & Crafts style architecture typically contain a **large, prominent fireplace, long porches and open floors**, rather than individual rooms. Houses using this style are sometimes referred to as **“Craftsman” homes**, as Stickley originally promoted the design in his magazine, *The Craftsman*.



The house, located at 438 Columbus Ave., is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a protected site in Syracuse.

Currently, the only thing that distinguishes the Stickley house from its neighbors is a large sign on the front lawn. But that will soon change as Rudd — along with other members of the local community — leads a million dollar restoration effort of the famous home, with construction set to begin around November.

“I’ve been waiting a long time to work on this house,” Rudd said. “(When the project is over), I’ll have the satisfaction that it actually came into fruition of being finished and it’s saved. The house is a tremendous thing for the community.”



Lukas Halloran / Staff Photographer

But multiple people involved with the project said the purpose of the house once the restoration is complete has changed since the first plans were developed.

Initially, the house was to be turned into an Arts and Crafts museum in partnership with Syracuse's Everson Museum of Art, said the project's manager, Beth Crawford, a senior associate and designer at Crawford & Sterns Architects and Preservation Planners.

But, after a change in director, the Everson dropped the project. Now, the house will be restored in a two-phase process, and turned into an inn and event space.

"A traditional house museum is going passe," Crawford said. "It's not terribly interactive. Exhibits aren't changing."

Spearheading the new plan is the Onondaga Historical Association, which will oversee phase two of the restoration. Gregg Tripoli, the historical association's executive director, said that his organization was originally approached to run the Arts and Crafts museum, but they were not interested.

"It's very important for any project that we do, for us to be able to build a sustainable business model," Tripoli said. "We were not interested in doing a typical old-style house museum. They don't work. It's a bad model. It's outdated and it's not engaging people."

The new plan is to have the first floor open to the public, with tours, lectures and events available on a regular basis, Tripoli said. The second and third floors will be turned into high-end, craftsman-style hotel rooms.

"I don't know if there is any other place doing this sort of thing with house museums," Tripoli said. "I'm not saying it isn't a risky venture. But, that is part of entrepreneurial nonprofit management."

Phase one of the project will involve stabilization of the house and will be completed by the University Neighborhood Preservation Association, Crawford said. UNPA will perform asbestos abatement, install a new front porch and repair the roof and windows.

Crawford said \$700,000 had been secured for the implementation of phase one through two separate grants. The project still faced a \$65,000 shortfall and two weeks ago, the Gustav Stickley House Foundation organized its first fundraiser overlooking Skaneateles Lake.

Grant Johnson, vice president of the foundation and president of the Westcott Neighborhood Association, said the organization had hoped to raise \$15,000 and that 50 to 75 people would attend the fundraiser. At the event, 134 people purchased tickets and \$26,500 was netted.

"We had donations come from as far away as Texas, Colorado," Johnson said. "It's really encouraging to see that many people interested in a project. It's not just like a Field of Dreams type thing, where if you build it they will come. A lot of effort went into it."

Despite the successful fundraiser, Crawford said that about \$30,000 still needs to be raised to fully fund phase one of the restoration, and another million will be needed by the time phase two is completed. But, this is not anticipated to interrupt current construction plans.

"When (UNPA) heard what the fundraising had been they were all very, very pleased," Crawford said. "I think they would have been pleased that the \$15,000 was raised. It was what they needed to get through. There's time."

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