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## EDITORIALS

### A Boost For Asylum Hill

Preservationists are completing a deal to save a century-old red brick house in Hartford's Asylum Hill neighborhood.

The distinctive structure is owned by Aetna Inc., which had planned to demolish it but later agreed to donate it to Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance. NINA, whose membership consists of major employers in the area, including Aetna, intends to move the Queen Anne house several blocks to a vacant lot on Ashley Street. The project, including restoration and construction of a foundation, will cost an estimated \$350,000. The move is expected to take place in March.

By saving the two-story structure, NINA hopes to increase pride and homeownership on Asylum Hill. That's an important goal because homeownership in the neighborhood is an abysmal 9 percent, compared with the city's overall 24 percent rate and a national rate of 66 percent.

In the 1980s, Aetna converted the Sigourney Street house to office space. NINA will turn it into a four-bedroom, single-family home and sell it for a projected \$130,000.

The move and conversion will be financed through corporate, state and local sources, including a \$50,000 donation from Aetna. The State Bond Commission may vote next week on a \$50,000 state grant that is crucial to the project's success.

Located just south of the Hastings Hotel and Conference Center, the 1890-era house at 47 Sigourney St. was once surrounded by mansions. One downside is that after the house is moved, Aetna plans to pave the site for more surface parking — an inefficient use of land.

Moving the structure to Ashley Street dovetails nicely with other plans to upgrade the area. Ashley Street is one of Mayor Eddie Perez's Pride Blocks, meaning it will get extra city attention. Moreover, NINA and two partners will soon begin restoration of five nearby boarded-up Victorian houses.

All of this activity shows what is possible when preservationists, city officials and civic-minded corporations work together to preserve and revitalize Hartford's neighborhoods — one house at a time.