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Moving Day In The City

At about 7:30 a.m. this Sunday, an 1890 Victorian brick house will begin a slow journey along Hartford streets to a new location on Asylum Hill.

The complicated all-day move is a milestone. First, it is a significant victory for historic preservation and, second, it signals a drive to increase homeownership in the Asylum Hill neighborhood.

Aetna Inc. planned to demolish the handsome house, at 247 Sigourney St., across from its campus, but eventually agreed to donate the structure to preservationists if they would move it. Last fall the newly formed non-profit Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance took the lead in raising money and finding a suitable location. NINA soon found a lot on Ashley Street, in the midst of similarly distinguished Victorian houses.

The \$350,000 project is being financed with city, state and private grants and tax credits. Once the single-family, three-bedroom dwelling is restored, it will be offered for sale later

this year to an owner-occupant, probably for \$150,000 or more.

NINA, in cooperation with two other housing groups, also plans to restore and sell five other one- and two-family nearby homes listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The goal is to spark a surge of renewal activity and boost home ownership, thereby increasing neighborhood pride and stability.

Currently, fewer than 10 percent of Asylum Hill residents own their homes, compared with a citywide average of 24 percent and a national average of 66 percent.

NINA is committed to increasing homeownership, a goal shared by Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez. The mayor has said that raising the homeownership rate is a top priority.

Despite problems involving crime, middle-class flight and housing abandonment, Asylum Hill still boasts hundreds of historic homes that could become attractive assets if they are restored and maintained.

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