

ARCHAEOLOGISTS ARE taking test borings from the Yates House in the city's Stockade section to learn the age of trees used in building the structure. **B2**

THE DAILY GAZETTE

SCHENECTADY

Construction to start on townhouses

Builders expect to begin sales of units by spring

BY KATHLEEN MOORE
Gazette Reporter

A townhouse project that languished for years off Van Vranken Avenue is finally going to be built.

CW Custom Builders will break ground by the end of next week and will build their first two houses over the winter. In the spring, they will start selling custom houses for \$197,900.

Despite the weak housing market, Pat Cherko of CW said he thinks the houses will sell quickly.

"We're selling a lifestyle. It's a maintenance-free community," he said. "In the

spring we feel the market will pick up significantly with the new jobs at GE. We want to keep some of those people in Schenectady."

General Electric is hiring 500 new professionals at its Schenectady plant over the next 18 to 24 months.

The company spent Wednesday and Thursday hauling away trash at what had become a popular illegal dumping zone.

A fully paved road leads to 45 vacant lots on seven acres between Anthony Street and Stevenson Street. Houses were once expected in 2004. Since there's still not a single building there, it's easy to drive into the wooded area and toss anything

from refrigerators to tires without fear of reprisal.

"There was a lot of trash on the site," Cherko said. "We were down there all day cleaning."

They don't expect dumping problems again, since workers will begin building immediately. Cherko expects the site to sell out in three years, with each house built in three to four months.

CW Custom Builders is now the third company to buy the site, developed by Christopher Myers. The last two companies did not build anything, and the land reverted back to Myers repeatedly.

This summer, Myers began to seriously

consider building the houses himself.

"I was always confident in the townhouse project," he said.

Then CW offered to buy the land for \$1.5 million. That's \$600,000 more than Myers' last sale of the site, and \$400,000 more than his development company spent to buy the land and put in the roads, sewer and water pipes.

Myers said he's relieved work will finally get under way.

The long process began in 2004, when Myers asked the city for approval to build condominiums or single-family houses on the site. He got permission to build single-family houses.

"I put all the roads in. Upstate Home Builders had a contract to build 36 homes. Then they backed out," he said. "I think they were concerned about building single-

family homes in the city at the time."

He got the site rezoned to allow townhouses in 2005 and then sold the site to Lewis Family Builders for \$900,000. He said the price allowed him to make a slight profit, even though he'd spent \$1.1 million buying and developing the land. But he wasn't happy with what happened to the site.

"Over the course of the next year, they didn't do a single thing on the site," Myers said.

He still held the mortgage, so he offered to forgive it in return for taking the land back.

"As I was contemplating building them myself, CW approached me," he said.

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