

Real Estate Journal

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Passero creates design specs. for Albion Academy



The Albion Academy

The Albion Academy is finding new life as modern housing for senior citizens and as a home for additional services for seniors and the general public. The rehabilitation and renovation of the former elementary school into new apartments has inspired creative solutions to the problems found in this aging and neglected building.

Built in 1906, the Albion Academy originally served as a high school until a new one was built in the 1930s. The academy then became the grammar school, serving kindergarten through sixth grades before being closed in the 1960s. It is located on East Academy St.

Rural Opportunities, Inc. (ROI) began planning in 2005 to reclaim the aging building and restore its status as an anchor. ROI determined that senior housing was to be the best primary use for the academy, as this use would bring in the funding needed for its rehabilitation. During the planning process, the Orleans County Office for the Aging and the Arc of Orleans County also supported having space allocated in the academy to serve their populations and local residents.

This balanced approach to planning, considering the needs of all parties involved, resulted in a unique concept in senior housing and services. Thirty residential units will be created on the second, third and fourth floors. The first floor will be home to facilities useful to both the building's residents and to the local community.

Half of the first floor will be allocated to the Office for the Aging. The Arc of Orleans County will utilize the other half of the first floor for a senior day care center and office space.

Construction began on the academy in Sept. of 2007 and is scheduled to be complete by the beginning of 2009. ROI has partnered with Nathaniel General Contractors and Rochester-based Passero Associates to create design specifications that met the required budget. Nathaniel General Contractors is serving as general contractor, providing design-build and construction services. The total cost of the project is about \$7 million, with funding coming from ROI, the NYS Division of Housing & Community Renewal, Neighborworks America, the National Equity Fund, M&T Bank, Federal Home Loan Bank through its member bank Maple City Bank, and construction financing provided by Greater Rochester Housing Partnership and Bank of America.

Mira Mejibovsky, senior project architect of Passero, said, "It has been both a pleasure and a challenge to save the many historical elements of this building. We have found some creative design solutions which have resulted in an extraordinary project." Passero is providing complete architectural and engineering design services.

The entire building has been made fully accessible, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. The core area of the building houses a new elevator, laundry facilities and storage on the second and third floors. Additional storage is available in the basement, also reached by the elevator.

Serious environmental issues with the building have been addressed, including asbestos and lead abatement.

The restoration was coordinated with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to ensure that every effort was made to appropriately preserve the building, and the project designs received the approval of the agency.