The Eagle-Tribune

Affordable home near completion in Andover

By Crystal Bozek
Staff Writer

ANDOVER — The construction isn't done quite yet, but Andover Community Trust yesterday dedicated its fourth permanently affordable home at 94 Cheever Circle with a small ceremony in the midst of an excavator and other equipment.

The single-family house should be completed in two months.

"Nobody will know it isn't just like every other house on the street," the trust's executive director, Susan Stott, said. "It will blend right in."

The three-bedroom, 1,500-square-foot house will be sold for $161,200. The owner selection process begins next month.

To qualify, applicants' total household income must be less than 80 percent of the area median income, which for a family of five would be $66,400. Preference is given to first-time home buyers and people with an Andover connection.

Officials at yesterday's ceremony commended the nonprofit group for its work.

"ACT has picked up the challenge of establishing scattered-site affordable housing," Town Manager Reginald "Buzz" Stapczynski said after the quick ceremony. "They figured out how to do it. In the '80s and the early '90s, it was something people only talked about."

State Sen. Susan Tucker, D-Andover, also attended the event.

In order to make sure the home stays affordable, Andover Community Trust continues to own the land.

"Many of our homeowners tell us they are never leaving," Stott said laughing.

Andover Community Trust President John Pearson, of Margulies & Associates, designed the Cheever Circle home for free. William Macleod of Andover Consultants also donated his engineering services to the project. Some materials were donated from Jackson Lumber and Harvey Industries.

"It's a who's who of the community," Stapczynski said.

Andover Community Trust started in 1992 and so far has been behind the construction of homes on Haverhill Street, Heather Drive and River Road. This was the first time the group had to purchase land for a home. Other parcels have been donated by the landowners.

And recent houses have all been Energy Star homes, meaning they are energy-efficient.

"They can afford to take a chance to build a green house as a prototype of energy efficiency and savings in the community," Stapczynski said. "These homes are good examples."

Stott said Andover Community Trust will continue to reach out to owners of nonconforming house lots, where a modest affordable home might be built. The Cheever Circle lot was too small for a market-rate home, but zoning regulations allow for affordable homes to build on the unorthodox sites. Cheever Circle is off Walnut Street.

The group hopes to partner with Greater Lawrence Technical School on future houses — which they've done in the past — to keep the cost to the home buyer down. The high school was busy building a home in Lawrence this time around.

"We're looking at a few sites. But we do not have a specific site picked out for our next home," Stott said. "If anyone knows of one, they can contact us."

Want to buy an affordable home?

What: Information session for 94 Cheever Circle

When: April 8, 7 p.m.; April 13, 2 p.m.

Where: Memorial Hall Library

Important: Interested buyers must attend one of the meetings.

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