

# Owners turning historic Lynch House into B&B

Historic Houses - Beach Area  
4.8.06  
Hope is for property to enliven neighborhood

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SANTA CRUZ — When the Lynch House was built on West Cliff Drive 130 years ago, it sat alone near some orchards with only the lighthouse a mile down the road.

Owner Sedgewick J. Lynch, a carpenter who engineered the wharf and made his fortune during the famed Gold Rush, had the large, white Victorian built for his family to live in 1877 for \$12,000 — an outrageous amount of money in an age of \$100 homes.

The now-dilapidated house, which also has been a hospital, office and vacation rental during the past century, is about to begin a new chapter as a bed-and-breakfast.

Renovation on the Italianate-style Victorian started this week by co-owners Corbett

Wright and Barry Swenson Builders to turn the 5,200-square-foot house into The Inn on West Cliff.

A new inn, they say, is a way to upgrade the aging beach area and spark some new life into the local tourism industry.

"We're getting it as close as possible to its original historic value, like it was in 1877," said Wright, a county resident and land developer based in San Jose. "People are already calling us trying to book their weddings here for next year."

Planned for the empty plot of land Swenson owns next to the Lynch House is a nine-unit luxury apartment complex, all three-bedroom units with 2½-baths and two-car garages going for \$2,500-\$3,500 a month.

Swenson wanted to build for-sale townhomes on the site, but exorbitant insurance costs forced the developer to change housing plans to apartments, said Mike Perkins, project manager for Barry Swenson Build-

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ers.

The overall project is estimated to cost \$11 million and should be ready for residents and visitors in spring 2007, Perkins said.

The City Council approved the townhome/bed-and-breakfast proposal in July 2004. Their approval requires the Lynch House restoration be completed before residents are allowed to move in to the apartments, Councilman Mike Rotkin said.

"The council's main interest is to preserve that house," Rotkin said. "The pressure is to not make the house the last priority."

Making the Lynch House into a nine-room bed-and-breakfast will cost about \$2 million and include restoration details such as a widow's walk, outside decks, refurbishing the home's four fireplaces and building a mahager's studio in the back, Wright said.

Several rooms will have ocean views.

Room rates have yet to be determined, said a spokeswoman for the Four Sisters Inns, a company based in Monterey that runs several bed-and-breakfasts from Napa to Seattle and will operate The Inn on West Cliff.

Two bears, made of redwood and cast in cement, at the entrance of the property's driveway will also be restored and kept as part of the renovation project.

Swenson is also co-owner of La Bahia, the run-down apartment complex on Beach Street across from Main Beach. Plans are moving forward by Swenson to tear down that historic structure and build a boutique hotel in its place.

"The Lynch House project is part of our continued desire to improve and preserve much of the beach area's historic integrity," Perkins said, "as well as improve the tourist experience."

Residents of Clearview Mobile Home Park, which sits directly behind the Lynch House and is also owned by Swenson, will see a new community room and electronic gate at the park's Bay Street entrance as part of upgrades the council required for the project's approval, Perkins said.

Many residents say the neglected Lynch House, vacant for the past 15 years, has been a source of frustration because

often homeless people break in to camp or young people go there to party, said resident Anita Webb.

"Restoration of the house, everyone is for that. The restoration has been a long time in coming," Webb said. "We're lukewarm about it being a bed-and-breakfast."

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Barry Swenson Builders will develop luxury apartments on this vacant lot, above, next to Santa Cruz's historic Lynch House. Mike Perkins of Barry Swenson Builders and Lynch House owner Corbett Wright are at right.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

