

Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) News

November 4, 2009



Photo courtesy of Cape Cod Times/Paul Blackmore.

Curio House Comes Home to Cape Cod

Three tractor trailers carrying Curio House moved slowly over the Bourne Bridge on October 27, carrying the hopes and aspirations for The Community Green in Sandwich.

The house, designed and built for the national Solar Decathlon in Washington, D.C., will become the first residential structure at Community Green.

“Curio House is symbolic, in many ways, of what we want to achieve at The Community Green,” said Rick Presbrey, CEO and president of Housing Assistance Corporation. “It is an example of green design and construction. It requires behavior change. It is a learning tool on many levels. Most important of all, it will be lived in by someone who needs and values a place to call home.”

Curio House is the product of Team Boston, students representing Boston Architectural College and Tufts University, which was invited to compete in the Department of Energy's biannual decathlon, which was held last month on the National Mall. Although most of the 20 houses that competed will be used for research and educational purposes, Curio House is one of the few supersolar houses that will actually serve its intended purpose, providing a home, in this case for an agricultural manager at Community Green.

The house was built in Medford on the Tufts campus, moved to Washington for the decathlon, then disassembled into three modules and wrapped for its journey to the Cape. It will remain in storage in Bourne while HAC's Housing Development Department prepares for its reconstruction.

Funds for the house, which HAC purchased for \$150,000, were raised specifically for those purposes this summer. HAC needs to raise about \$150,000 more to complete the infrastructure and address other site issues.

Curio is an 800-square-foot structure that has a modern, natural look. The inside is airy and open, with specially designed heat-generating windows and sliders. The furniture is movable so that it is comfortable, whether its one or two residents are home alone or hosting a party.

Project manager Colin Booth describes the background behind Curio: “The Curio team set out to focus on not just solar power, but on the deeper meanings of sustainability. We all generally

designers attempting to solve a myriad of complex issues, we took it upon ourselves to forgo the short-sighted rules of the competition, and take advantage of making a more important point on an international stage.

"Much of our success in that is due to the promise of a long life with HAC. It proves the point that in order for a sustainable house of the future to be relevant today, it needs to be accessible to those who desire and need this sort of architecture."

According to Gisele Gauthier, director of Housing Development at HAC, the state Department of Environmental Protection is reviewing the agency's application for a wastewater treatment permit. Although the wastewater treatment plant isn't going to be built until the apartments at Community Green are under construction, the state does require the permit be in place before the house can go up.

When it is reconstructed, the house will utilize a small septic system for its waste. HAC's goal is that it will be entirely off the grid.

Kudos go to Gauthier; her staff members Adrienne Danner and Kate Ferreira; Tom Howes and Christian Valle from The Valle Group; and architect Rick Fenuccio for working with the truckers, crane company, and the BAC and Tufts team for successfully working out the myriad of details to relocate Curio House to Sandwich.

In addition to Curio House, The Community Green will include 57 rental apartments, four other single-family homes and an Enterprise Center that will serve formerly homeless and lower income people in a green environment. There will be job training and employment opportunities in agriculture and culinary arts, and clean energy economic development efforts.