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The Mansion acquired by meditation center

By JONDI GUMZ -- Santa Cruz Sentinel
Posted: 06/11/2011 02:49:29 PM PDT

SANTA CRUZ - The Mansion, a residential care home for the elderly at 1906 Glen Canyon Road, is slated to become a retreat for up to 40 people to meditate in the Buddhist tradition.

"We looked at hundreds of properties for four or five years," said Ines Freedman, a participant at the Insight Meditation Center of Redwood City, which bought the property in May for \$2.6 million from Dede Beam, who ran The Mansion.

"We wanted something within driving distance," Freedman said. "This is semirural, open, and has a nice feeling, and neighbors were happy to have us."

The Mansion is a rebuilt and expanded 18,000-square-foot farmhouse with a commercial kitchen. It sits on 2.8 acres of landscaped grounds behind a wrought-iron gate and is part of the Sunny Acres homeowners association.

Volunteers who participate in the meditation center's programs in Redwood City visited Friday to tend to the flowers and perform other maintenance chores.

Freedman, 57, of Sunnyvale, a retired chiropractor, came with her husband Bruce. She plans to volunteer full time to get the retreat center ready to open a year from now.

The downstairs looks anything but institutional, with a piano and chandelier-style lighting in the living room and stained glass windows.

She planned the building in 1986 for her mother, who had cancer. Sadly, her mother died before it opened, and Beam decided to open the doors to people with Alzheimer's. She put up the gate to keep them from wandering away.

The upstairs is an unfinished 6,000-square-foot shell where Beam had considered expanding.

That area is slated for completion as a meditation area, with part of the space turned into bedrooms for people participating in weekend or weeklong retreats.

Santa Cruz architect Gerald Yates has been retained to draw up the plans.

"It's important for us to stay local," Freedman said.

Insight Meditation Center started in 1986 as an informal sitting group learning about Buddhist teaching and practice.

The founding leader is Gil Fronsda. He began training in 1989 to teach Vipassana, which means sitting meditation.

The group, which is open to all religions, has grown to 400 participants, ranging from teens to retirees, and added a second teacher, Andrea Fella.

Instruction is available at the group's rented space in Redwood City and online; there are no employees.

"Everything is done by donation," Freedman said, using the word "dana," which means generosity.

She said county planning staff have been helpful.

"They did things faster than we expected," she said.

Fronsda is asking for donations to raise \$2.3 million to complete the renovations at the new retreat center and acquire an adjacent 38-acre forest preserve.

Every dollar raised up to \$500,000 will be matched by a donor, according to a letter Fronsda posted on the center's website, describing the retreat center as "our gift to future generations."



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For information go to <http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/>

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I hope they realize the ground water has an enormous amount of iron in it and the chemicals from the vineyard next door and across the road are going to affect water quality and quantity in the future.

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I would love to help and volunteer to bring this place into the desired result. What a wonderful adventure. Good luck!

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As a plumbing contractor, ditto to that Gemma.

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A – OK!

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