

Once for learning, now for living

By STEPHANIE WHYCHE
Staff reporter

Ellen Wood doesn't want to retire to the country. She already lives there.

Instead, the 66-year-old artist and homemaker plans to move from her quiet country home near Newark to a one-bedroom apartment in The Lorelton — a new, 62-unit retirement apartment building in west Wilmington.

"Privacy when you want to be alone . . . people nearby when you want to share experiences," reads the building's brochure. Not to mention proximity to four churches, a public library and two banks.

"We're calling it 'club atmosphere,'" says one of the building's developers.

Pets are allowed — small, housebroken pets. No llamas or ponies, please.

So eager was Wood for city life that she began moving furniture, rugs and paintings into her new abode weeks before it officially opened. Never mind that construc-

tion workers were still hammering away.

The Lorelton, a 55-year-old, ornate building at Fourth Street and Woodlawn Avenue, was the former Charles B. Lore Elementary School.

The former elementary school will officially open Saturday as a 62-unit retirement apartment building.

When it officially opens Saturday as a retirement apartment house, Wood will be its first occupant.

"From the first time I saw it over a year ago, I was so impressed with the building . . . its architecture," says Wood, a lifelong Delawarean. "I think it has been beautifully decorated, and I think it was a wonderful idea to restore the building."

The sign outside boldly proclaims: "New Choice . . . Visit Today."

That was the hook for Wood. She wants new choices; she doesn't want to worry about repairing a faucet, shoveling the driveway or repairing a furnace. At The Lorelton, maintenance and repair are somebody else's responsibility.

"My interests are in drawing and painting," Wood says. "I hope I'll have more time to pursue those interests."

Diane Stat Gross, marketing representative for The Lorelton, says, "As you get more older Americans, there will be an increasing demand for homes for them — homes that are homey and comfortable, but don't have the difficulties often linked to home ownership."

Gross is a partner in Lore Associates L.P., the family-run development firm that transformed the school into a luxury home for men and women older than 62.

The Lorelton was to have opened in April, Gross says, but improvements caused delays.

"We changed some of the specifications, and upgraded the engineering, and improved the building over the first plan," she says.

"Our whole interest here is on comfort. We want people to really feel at home here — that they are not just living in an apartment, but a \$6 million house."

Actually, that's the price tag for the entire project, which includes a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Covering an entire city block, the two-story limestone and brick structure is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As such, its exterior looks much like it has throughout the years. In fact, the name of the school remains prominently etched in stone over the main entranceway.

But pass through the large, electronically activated sliding doors



Staff photos by Andrea Mihalik

A worker puts finishing touches on the 92-seat dining room. Ellen Wood, The Lorelton's first occupant, unpacks.

into the carpet and marbled main lobby, and the building shows scant evidence of its former academic life.

Former Lore teachers who have stopped by to see the project are "absolutely amazed. They can't believe it was a school," Gross says.

Thanks to Design Collaborative Inc., the architect firm, and Builders and Managers Inc., the general contractors, the classrooms disappeared.

In their place: one- and two-bedroom self-contained homes, each different in its own way, but all having high ceilings, modern equipped kitchens, tiled baths, brass door knockers and light — lots of light.

The former kindergarten is now the stately but cozy Charles B. Lore

Library.

The wide, bare-brick corridors are painted cream, and the bare floors have been laid with plush carpeting.

Included in 40,000 square feet of common space are a 92-seat dining room, an outdoor participatory garden, greenhouse, penthouse sunroom, two courtyards and other social and activity spaces.

Credit for landscape design — the actual planting is still under way — goes to Edward R. Bachtel & Associates Inc.

Of course, everything comes with a price tag.

The fully refundable entry deposit — if a resident should decide to leave — depends on the size of the apartment. Average fees range from \$70,000 to \$80,000,

though one of the larger two-bedroom apartments goes for \$109,900.

Not refundable: the monthly service charge — ranging from \$700 per person for a double-occupancy apartment to \$1,100 for single occupancy.

The basic fee covers two meals a day, 24-hour security, maintenance, real estate taxes and city water fees. Special events and transportation to shopping areas and places of entertainment are also covered.

Monthly fees do not cover electric or telephone bills.

Among the out-of-pocket amenities offered are dry-cleaning delivery service, housekeeping, linen service, guest meals and tray service.

Nursing care is not provided.

"This is not a nursing home," Gross says. But "if a person gets sick [he or she] can still live here, of course. Maybe they can have a nurse to visit them." Such services, she says, must be arranged and paid for by the resident.

Gross says there have been lots of inquiries about The Lorelton from Delaware and nearby Pennsylvania, and from as far away as Florida, North Carolina and Georgia.

But Gross says the place is far from being booked up.

"We got reservations on some of the larger apartments," she says. "We anticipate once this place gets going, the demand will be significant."

For Further Information:

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LORELTON
RETIREMENT APARTMENTS

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