

Hot Commodity on Stowe Street

Decent housing in Waterbury is scarce as hen's teeth, so when Sisler Builders converted a derelict building into five apartments, they were snapped up like dollar bills thrown about Grand Central Station. Well before completion, all five apartments were rented.

"The more people you can have living in town, the better for community economics," said Alyssa Johnson, economic development director for Revitalizing Waterbury. "A variety of housing options support a diverse, multi-generational, multi-income, multi-ethnic community. These five apartments fill a need for dense, multi-family housing. It's a wonderful option where people can remain in the community and have safe and secure housing at market rate."

The renovation was not just about providing much needed housing. It was also about preserving the character of Waterbury's downtown area and removing a lingering eyesore on Stowe Street, directly opposite Thatcher Brook Elementary School.

Steve Sisler, owner of Sisler Builders, grew up in an environment of historic preservation that has influenced his construction ethics. "My mother was involved in historic preservation in Ithaca, N.Y., when I was grow-



ing up there. She educated me about the importance old buildings play in the character and beauty of downtown areas. Part of that education was about architectural trends at the turn of the century.

"I've lived in Waterbury for 37 years," Sisler added. "Our sons went to Thatcher Brook from 1993 to 2000, and we would see that neglected property every day. I wanted to remove the eyesore and create something beautiful that fit the architecture typical to the turn-of-the-century, when the original house was built, that was cohesive with the school and had the timelessness of a brick exterior."

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The Sislers purchased the building in 2010 and immediately replaced the stone and brick foundation, which Steve believes would not have survived Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. Sisler Builders got busy with other building projects and just did band-aid repairs to the building. When it became clear the roof wouldn't make it through another winter, and they had the capacity to design and build a new building, they tore the old one down.

The new building, completed in November of 2018, has three single-bedroom apartments geared towards seniors on the first floor. The second floor has two apartments: a two-bedroom and a three-bedroom for families. All are energy efficient and use no fossil fuels directly for heating and cooling. The solar array on the roof makes it nearly net-zero, and the building exceeds Efficiency Vermont's second-tier energy compliance guidelines. Consequently, they are very comfortable to occupy and inexpensive for the occupants to operate and maintain.

Michelle Abajian, who works for the Vermont Bar Association as their lawyer referral and membership coordinator, moved into the second-floor three-bedroom apartment with her three children ages 16, 14, and 10, who live with her part time. "I can't get over how lucky I am to have landed here," she said. "It's clean, modern,

Painted maple cabinets with nickel hardware, Energy Star appliances, and luxury vinyl plank floors combined with sheetrock returns on the windows, along with Vermont green slate sills provide a sleek, clean look and low maintenance and operating cost for the occupants. Brick gives the building a grounded timeless look, while siding of wider and then narrower dimensions brings down the scale and adds interest. A private back courtyard with lawn furniture and grill fosters community.



easy to maintain, and has everything I need, including a mud room. The layout is thoughtful and it has nice light. The best part is the location. It's ideal. I'm in the village, near school and the public transit bus line. I've always lived in this village and didn't want to leave."

Abajian's daughter, Amelia, says she likes that it's new and clean and has a modern look. Her brother, Peter, likes it because it's easy to remember where he lives. They all love the size of the living space—spacious without being cavernous. There is also ample parking and a courtyard area with dining set and grill.

Alyssa Johnson concurs that Sisler Builders was thoughtful about the building process. "The ease of accessibility, regardless of age, is a bonus. The bottom floor apartments are ADA compliant. It's easy to walk to downtown and the neighbors are thrilled to not have to look at the old eyesore." She also points out that this was a private building project that the town did not have to make happen. "It's transforming and provides value to the community. We wish there were more like it."

When it comes to
can count on Leslie
her time, experience



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In the News

All in the Family—We now have three multi-generational families working for Sisler Builders! Shannon Kennison, a long-time finish carpenter, has his son Noah at his side. Shannon is teaching his talents and proficiencies to Noah.

Noi Jones' daughter Tanika has also joined us as a laborer and apprentice carpenter.

Luke Sisler, son of Steve and Sharon, has been with the company three years. He is a site supervisor.

We are proud to provide an environment that multiple generations want to be a part of, where they can develop their skills and learn about the trade.

It's a Girl!—On August 17, carpenter Chad Roy and his wife Megan had a baby girl, Mirabelle. It will be a while until Mirabelle can be a full-on team member.

Say "I Do"—Also on August 17, Chris Boyea, a Sisler Builders site supervisor, married Lisa Boyden.



Ask the craftsmen.

Why use different siding materials on one building?

In a nutshell, it's all about reducing the scale of the facade and adding visual interest so the building feels more grounded and connected to the land. Adding a layer of detail above the base makes the building more visually appealing.

Typically we will use a masonry product, such as stone or brick, at the base to tie it to the ground. Masonry products anchor a building, so it doesn't feel adrift. Above that we will use more decorative siding, colors, and trim materials. In new homes as well as renovation projects, we will define the main house, then distinguish additions from the main house by employing a less-embellished look. By thoughtfully varying the siding materials we can change a plain, boring house to a warm, welcoming one.

*Send your building question to
Ask@SislerBuilders.com.*

We'll answer it in our next newsletter.