

# City receives grant for estate renovation

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MIDDLETOWN — The city is moving ahead in its plan to restore the grounds of the 100-acre Long Hill estate.

The mayor's office recently announced that the city's application for an "America The Beautiful" urban forestry grant, for landscaping at the estate, has been approved.

The city intends to use the mansion for a banquet hall and conference center. The extensive grounds are now a public

park.

The \$3,000 grant will supplement funds already in place and help restore what landscape designers call the "South Allee" — an alley of cedar trees on the lawn behind the former Wadsworth mansion.

City forester Bruce Spaman said the allee, which consists of twin rows of red cedars backed by a stand of white pines, was once the prime feature of the ground's imaginative landscap-

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Catherine Avalone/The Middletown Press

A view of the back of Long Hill Estates in Middletown.

## Long Hill getting facelift

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ing.

However, disease and storm damage over the years has taken its toll, leaving gaping holes in this evergreen corridor.

Spaman said 70 arborvitae, an evergreen species similar to cedar, will be planted to replace the dead and dying trees. He said the arborvitae were specially chosen because they are less bulky than other species and therefore won't encroach upon the lawn.

"They should look really nice," he said.

The landscaping project, which will cost \$12,400, is slated to begin in the spring of 1999. Youths from the Alternate Incarceration Center Forestry Corps and volunteers from Wesleyan University will help with the tree planting.

Center youths already have been doing extensive clearing of underbrush that had taken over the grounds.

The Long Hill mansion was built in 1908-1917 for the

Middletown philanthropist and conservationist Col. Clarence S. Wadsworth and his wife, Katherine Fearing Hubbard Wadsworth.

The eclectic structure itself is an early example of cast concrete. The front of the building features an imposing Greek-style columned and pedimented porch, while the rear, looking south toward the allee, boasts a central Palladian loggia in this concrete material.

In 1944, the Our Lady of Cenacle religious order acquired Long Hill and maintained it as convent and retreat. The city bought the estate in 1994 for \$1.3 million and engaged David Scott Parker architects of Southport to supervise a \$3.1 million restoration.

The work is being done by Middletown restoration firm of Kronenberger & Sons — the same firm restoring the Main Street Armory. The estate's rehabilitation is expected to be complete in the spring or summer of 1999.