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Garden Spot Village to buy Maple Farm

BY TIM MEKEEL, Staff Writer

No more med carts. No more nurses' stations. No more call bells.



By 2011, the institutional, hospital-style of skilled nursing care at Maple Farm Nursing Center could be a thing of the past.

The Akron facility is expected to be sold by Lancaster General Health to Garden Spot Village, which would renovate it into numerous household-style settings.

In a transformation costing \$2 million to \$3 million, the building would be divided into a yet-to-be-determined number of sections, each occupied by a group of about 20 residents.

Every group of residents, or household, would have its own kitchen, living room and dining room. Down a short hallway would be a private bedroom for each resident.

"Hospitals are a great place for short-term stays, but nobody wants to live there. We want to live at home. So this creates home," said Garden Spot Village's Steve Lindsey on Friday.

"It's a radically different approach to skilled nursing," added Lindsey, the chief executive officer.

The dramatic shift at Maple Farm would echo similar moves by Mennonite Home and Brethren Village to provide skilled-nursing residents with home-like environments.

For instance, medications for Maple Farm residents would be kept in locked medicine cabinets in bathrooms. Nurses would have offices in the household's area. They'd be summoned by pagers they'd carry.

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It's the same model that Garden Spot Village has been using since 2006, when it switched the skilled-nursing center at its New Holland campus from the traditional institutional model.

The change has proven extremely popular with the center's 73 residents, according to Lindsey.

"They absolutely love it," he said. "The difference doesn't have anything to do with the quality of the medical care. You can provide high-quality medical care in an institutional setting.

"But it does make a significant difference in the quality of their lives."

Maple Farm got its start in the 1930s when Lillian Frandzen opened a summer resort, patronized mostly by wealthy Philadelphians, according to newspaper files.

Over the years, it evolved into a skilled-care facility. Frandzen's granddaughter, Mary Ann Russell, sold it to Lancaster General Health in 1997 for \$6.6 million, courthouse records show.

"Since 1997, the health-care landscape has changed. The more appropriate setting for Maple Farm is with a larger continuing-care system such as Garden Spot Village," said Lancaster General spokesman John Lines.

Lines said Lancaster General "was happy to find a local nonprofit provider" to buy the facility. "That was a primary focus of ours when we began our search."

Garden Spot Village intends to buy Maple Farm effective Sept. 1 for an undisclosed price. The 604 Oak St. site is a 65-acre property, consisting of a 41,000-square-foot skilled nursing facility and two houses.

Its name would remain Maple Farm. The facility would be open to people in the community who need skilled care, not just Garden Spot Village residents.

Licensed for 119 residents, Maple Farm now has 95, a number that Garden Spot Village would let drop by temporarily not accepting new residents. That way, space would become unoccupied, allowing it to be renovated.

Work would start in fall 2010 and take 12 to 18 months.

When completed, Maple Farm would have less capacity, but the number has yet to be determined, said Lindsey. However, "the vast majority" of its 115 employees would be retained, he said.

Garden Spot Village's plan to buy Maple Farm is the second initiative to extend its reach beyond its New Holland campus, a 13-year-old community with nearly 1,000 residents.

As this newspaper reported last week, Garden Spot Village also is considering jointly developing "active adult" housing in downtown's vacant Lancaster Press building.

The Maple Farm project would alter more than the physical setting. It also would adjust the way the residents live, Lindsey explained.

"It gives them an opportunity to live life with purpose, with meaning, in spite of the fact that they need skilled nursing care," he said.

"They're empowered to make decisions -- when they want to go to bed, when they want to get up, what they want to eat, what activities they want to do. They create the personality of their household..."

"It's not staff-directed anymore. We call it 'person first.' It lets the people living in skilled nursing direct their own lives," said Lindsey.

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nBy 2011, Akron skilled nursing home would be converted to household-style facility.

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