



Steve Morrell

A Victorian home on Fourth Avenue.

The group's first mission was to create a better neighborhood for the poor residents of run-down Victorian houses.

"Over the past 30 years, social activism and Victorian restoration have accelerated to a point that the 4th & Gill Neighborhood and Historic District can proudly claim to be an urban success story," declares a brochure for newcomers to the area.

Graced with two-story, gingerbread Victorians and one-

story bungalows, 4th & Gill is protected by historic overlay zoning – requiring approval of any significant new construction or exterior changes to a house.

"It's meant to maintain the historic character of the exterior of a house," explains Tina Rosling, 4th & Gill Neighborhood Organization president, as she gives a visitor a walking tour.

Rosling and her husband, Eric Ohlgren, live in a 4,000-square-foot, 1878 green Craftsman house

where they have added a sunroom and back porch.

Ohlgren, owner of Heuristic Workshop, has left his craftsman's touch throughout their home, including the maple cabinets in daughter Kira's bedroom.

He was one of the pioneers when he bought the house – then a duplex – 20 years ago for \$35,000, says Rosling. Completely renovated houses in 4th & Gill now command in the \$150,000s.

Two doors down sits a purple and cream Victorian, and next door on the other side of Rosling and Ohlgren nests a house designed by the late Knoxville architect George Barber.

"It's a mix of homeowners and renters," says Rosling. "But I think what's really exciting is it keeps happening – people keep buying them and redoing them."

Indya Kincannon and her husband, Ben Barton, moved to 4th & Gill from Arizona. They found out about the neighborhood on

the Internet.

"We were looking for older homes with a lot of character," says Kincannon, who appreciates the sidewalks, porches and proximity to downtown and the University of Tennessee, where her husband is a law professor.

The mother of two produces 4th & Gill's quarterly newsletter and Web site. "This neighborhood makes you want to be involved because there's so much going on."

Neighborhood activities include

potluck dinners, Halloween parties, holiday open houses and clean-ups of the sidewalks, streets and alleys.

Rosling and Knoxville Public Service Director Bob Whetsel, a longtime 4th & Gill resident, started an annual neighborhood bike ride to promote cycling and showcase inner-city communities. This year's 10-mile (or optional 17-mile) tour took place Oct. 18.

The organizers say 4th & Gill's location near downtown makes bicycling attractive. Rosling, a nurse practitioner, bikes to work at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center. She and her husband ride 20 to 40 miles a day on weekends.

Whetsel reports that he and his wife, Melynda, recently cycled from 4th & Gill to the Fresh Market in the Sequoyah Hills neighborhood, almost all on greenways.

"You live in old neighborhoods, you just don't have the crush of automobiles that you do in West Knoxville on the weekends and evenings," he says.

A former Realtor, Whetsel has seen prices practically quadruple since he left teaching and started selling in 4th & Gill in 1987. "You had to really work with the banks and appraisers to get them to understand the value in these properties," he reflects.

"I think it's a great location. You know, the three key words in real estate – location, location, location. I think it's one of the reasons it's turned around. It wouldn't work if it was just trendy."

REHAB BENEFITS

- Building community
- Preserving history
- Improving lives of residents
- Protecting property values