

Around LI

Razing talks set in Brookhaven

Brookhaven officials have set public hearings to demolish four vacant and abandoned homes across the town.

The residences are on Washington Carver Drive and Middle Country Road in Coram; Spring Garden Road in Rocky Point, and Avenue B in Holbrook.

The hearings are to be at Town Hall, 1 Independence Hill in Farmingville, on March 22. Town officials said the homes were deemed unsafe after being inspected by engineers.

The cost of the demolition will be added to the homeowner's property tax bill.

— CARL MACGOWAN

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SMITHTOWN

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Pizza store owner buys iconic 1845 Smith mansion to restore its splendor

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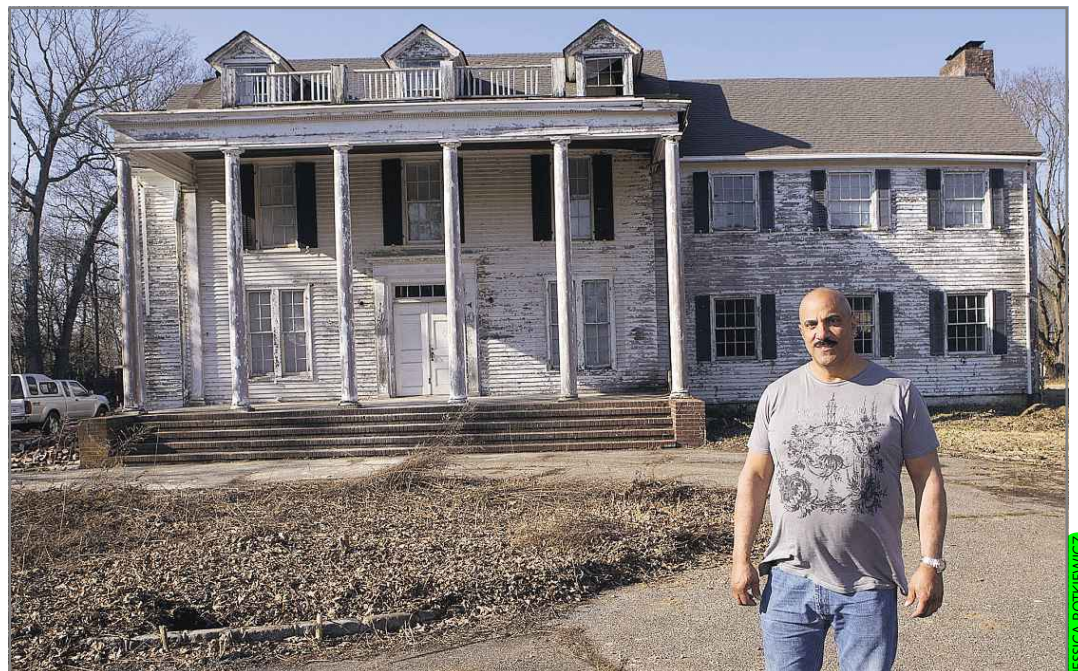
Ebo Hill mansion, whose 16 bedrooms, towering portico and 48 acres of woodland made it one of Smithtown's grandest before it fell into decline decades ago, is being bought and renovated.

Prospective owner Richard Albano, a Deer Park man formerly in the auto repair business who owns Richie's Pizza restaurants there and in Commack, aims to give new life to the home off Edgewood Avenue. Parking his black Mercedes in the circular drive the other day to give a tour of the place, he made a promise: "When I finish it, it's going to look like it did the day it was new. That's my dream."

Albano and current owner Richard Longobardi said they were in contract on the 1845 house but declined to give the sale price or discuss renovation costs. Longobardi said the sale was scheduled to close Thursday. Albano said he'd "flipped" eight houses in the past 10 months to raise funds for the purchase. After multiple sales over the years, the 11,094-square-foot home now sits on 3.2 acres. Longobardi and his wife, Lauren Longobardi, paid \$650,000 in 2001 for the house, according to records.

The home's unusual name may derive from that of a Native American boy or chief, according to archives in the Smithtown Library's Long Island Room. Another account in the archives suggests the name might be of an enslaved person.

Albano joins a list of owners that includes several generations of the town's founding Smith family: Ethelbert Smith, who worked in the China tea trade in the mid-19th century, and his son Richard Lawrence



Richard Albano is looking forward to making the 11,094-square-foot Ebo Hill mansion, once owned by descendants of the town's founding family, look like new. ■ Photo gallery: newsday.com/suffolk

Smith, who was prominent in yachting and horse circles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and did brisk business in World War I shipping horses to Allied forces in Europe.

The home was sold out of the family later. A 1941 sales brochure lists as selling points Nissequogue River dockage, a trout hatchery and two maids' rooms "with ample space for others if desired." A 1950 listing asks \$55,000 cash, about \$580,114 in today's dollars.

But the house fell into disrepair, said Brad Harris, the town historian. "For as long as I can remember it has always been boarded up, the grounds unkempt."

The home was last occupied in 2001, Albano said. Downed trees and three-foot-high grass confronted him when he toured the house earlier this year; in-



side, he and his workers found two-inch-thick plaster on the walls so badly water-damaged it will all have to be removed.

He said he would make some changes to make the home livable but preserve as many of the

home's features as possible. He showed the walk-in larder once chilled by water pumped from the Nissequogue River, whose thick walls were still cold; the 1,500-gallon water tank half-buried in the dark cellar, with rivets bigger than a man's fist. In the grand first-floor reception room, Albano pointed to discrete servant-summoning buttons and intricate wood ceiling molding. "All done by hand," he said. "There was no machine."

Twice, Albano said, he has found strangers roaming the mansion, as fascinated as he is by the place, and hundreds of people have followed his posts about the house on Facebook. He intends to open the house up for a tour when his work is finished but he would like unannounced visits to stop, he said, since this is the home where he intends to move his family.