

# Greensboro mansion of 'Hoarders' fame enters new chapter

By Dawn DeCwikiel-Kane dawn.kane@greensboro.com Jan 19, 2019



The Julian Price house at 301 Fisher Park Circle has undergone a major rejuvenation since January 2017 when it and the previous owner were featured in an episode of the TV reality series “Hoarders.” And more needs to be done, according to its new owners, Michael and Eric Fuko-Rizzo. “Let’s just say that this house requires millions of dollars of work Michael Fuko-Rizzo said.

Photos by H. Scott Hoffmann /News & Record

GREENSBORO — Spend a couple of nights — or more — in one of North Carolina’s grandest Tudor Revival-style homes.

Explore 31 rooms occupied in the early 1930s by Julian Price, who at the time was the head of the state’s largest corporation.

Enjoy cooking meals in its new state-of-the-art kitchen — or have a chef do it for you.

Wander its 1.6 acres of landscaped grounds and gardens. Do all of the above — for a fee.

This historic house at 301 Fisher Park Circle has undergone a major rejuvenation since its January 2017 appearance on the A&E television reality series “Hoarders.”

Come spring, its new owners plan to offer it for short-term rentals, much like a Vacation Rental By Owner.

They want to make it available for short-term stays by families or groups.

“To the average person, the house looks done,” co-owner Michael Fuko-Rizzo said. “But it needs various amounts of additional work and ongoing maintenance. This just allows us a little more time to continue investing in the property and letting

people enjoy it at the same time.”

As he speaks, a crew has brought in Universal Furniture items for photographs. The house is also available for location shoots such as this one.

Michael and Eric Fuko-Rizzo had planned to move in with their 4-year-old twin daughters, after hosting a Designer Showhouse there last spring to benefit nonprofit Preservation Greensboro.

But public interest continued beyond the showhouse.

Visitors still stopped by. The owners fielded requests for more tours and for short-term rentals. They also wanted to complete more restoration and upgrades.

So rather than move in from their Lake Jeanette-area house, the couple chose a different route.

“There’s a list of reasons why this is just the best all-around situation for the house right now,” Michael Fuko-Rizzo said. “But it’s really about our love for the house and sharing it with the public.

“Our girls are still very small and the house is very large,” he said. “We thought maybe in another year or two, that would be a more appropriate time to move in.”

In the meantime, Linda Lane, who chaired the designer showhouse, guides the owners on furnishings as they prepare for short-term rentals. They will mix new items with antiques.

“People drive by old houses and big estates and wonder,” Michael Fuko-Rizzo said. “It’s a great way to have a local experience that’s really not offered in many places.”

It won’t be a “special event center,” the owners say. They steer clear of saying the word “event.”

That’s because the property is zoned single-family residential. A special event center, where people pay to hold events, would require the zoning to be changed to commercial. The Fuko-Rizzos opted not to pursue that path.

People who rent the house will stay on the property known as Hillside, a brick and half-timbered mansion built in 1929 for Price, the president of

Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Co. It later served as the manse for nearby First Presbyterian Church.

It's listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Guilford County's list of historically significant properties.

For years, its beauty was hidden under overgrown foliage and clutter, accumulated by its former owner, Sandra Cowart.

The Fuko-Rizzos purchased Hillside for \$415,000 in September 2016 after the bank foreclosed on Cowart.

"Hoarders" filmed an episode there. More than 1.2 million households watched the drama unfold as crews emptied the house.

The Fuko-Rizzos restored its former glory.

Michael Fuko-Rizzo declined to say how much they have spent. "Let's just say that this house requires millions of dollars of work," he said.

The owners now have a revised website at <http://julianpricehouse.com>, where prospective renters can inquire about the details.

People will have to rent the entire house and sleep there, Fuko-Rizzo and Lane said. He estimates that the house can sleep 15 people in guest spaces with bathrooms. Each room will be named for past and present owners.

They haven't finalized rental rates but, "If you come here with 15 people, it will be less expensive than a hotel," he said.

A family could gather to celebrate a birthday or anniversary, Michael Fuko-Rizzo said.

Or the Fuko-Rizzos could rent it to traveling High Point Market attendees, just as many Triad homeowners rent out their houses to people taking part in the furniture show.

A bridal party or bridesmaids could rent it, but because of zoning rules, renters can't hold a wedding at the estate.

While property owners in general can hold a wedding at their home, they can't lease it to others for a wedding.

The Fisher Park neighborhood initially had a different vision for Hillside.

After the designer showhouse last spring, "We were hoping that this charming family was going to move in," Fisher Park resident Cheryl Pratt said.

Neighbors were disappointed when they didn't, Pratt said.

When a wedding was held at the house in November, Fisher Park neighbors complained about cars and noise.

"When someone said, 'Can I have a wedding there?' I had never processed that they couldn't or shouldn't," Michael Fuko-Rizzo said.

A holiday event for Realtors brought more traffic and complaints. Frustration on both sides spilled into the neighborhood association's annual meeting in December.

A neighborhood committee met with city of Greensboro representatives and Hillside's owners. Mike Kirkman, the city's zoning administrator, emailed guidance that the property could not be an event center without a zone change.

“No one wants to hear the word ‘rezoning’ in a historic neighborhood,” said Pratt, who heads the neighborhood’s Hillside committee.

The committee and the Fuko-Rizzos explored other options.

The city doesn’t have specific regulations dealing with short-term rentals — that is, residences offered for short stays listed on Airbnb, VRBO or similar vacation rental websites, Kirkman said. So it applies the rules for a tourist home, also known as a bed and breakfast. Those are allowed in single-family residential zones, provided owners get a special use permit and meet certain development standards, Kirkman said. The Fuko-Rizzos have not yet applied for that permit, he said.

But to Michael Fuko-Rizzo, “We are not a tourist home bed and breakfast. We are a private residence like all owners who use VRBO or rent their houses out for furniture market, a very common occurrence in the area.”

The Fuko-Rizzos have plenty of work ahead, aside from navigating regulations and furnishing the house for rentals.

They eventually want to finish its 3,000-square-foot basement with a gym, movie room, wine bar and pool table. They want to turn the gardener’s cottage into a suite. They want to expand landscaping and outdoor lighting and replace fencing.

With the rezoning issue off the plate, Fisher Park neighbors have calmed.

Pratt said she is adopting a wait-and-see attitude, to see how the owners’ plans for short-term rentals go.

“I wish them all the success in the world,” she said.

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