Stratford Towers: A $4.5M slice of history in Asheville, NC

The current owners of Stratford Towers, Gary and Brendan Ross, spent the past 15 years restoring the Asheville estate and updating it with modern luxury features, winning awards for their work. The unique property, currently listed by Sotheby's International Realty agent Tracy Veteto, is up for grabs on the market for $4.5 million, and seems to have been listed and re-listed since 2013 in search of a buyer.

The 7,672-square-foot home sits on 2.89 private acres with views of Asheville's countryside and mountains that include a long gated driveway, rolling lawns, a covered stone terrace, a meditation garden as well as secret gardens, a grotto, a reflecting pool with a fountain, an arbor and a gazebo.

Inside the home you'll find six bedrooms, five full bathrooms, a one powder room, a chef's kitchen with updated appliances and finishes, a formal dining room and a library.

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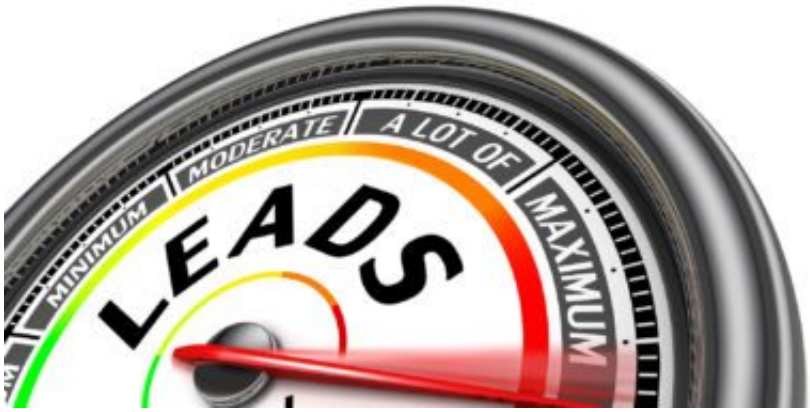
“The property is magnificent on its own, but when you consider its history, you realize that it is truly one of a kind. The added bonus of privacy with a sizable portion of land makes this a rare opportunity to own a classic and timeless luxury estate,” said Veteto.

Executive Director of the Preservation society of Asheville and Buncombe County, Jack W. L. Thomson, called the house “one of the finest examples of English Manorial style in western North Carolina … [the home] exemplifies elegance and design from a bygone era.”



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According to historical research provided by the owners and agent, Stratford Towers was built in 1925 by Wallace Davis, the President of Central Bank & Trust at the time. The stock market crash of 1929 saw the demise of Davis’s wealth and his imprisonment. Needless to say, the home moved on to other owners.

Florida socialites Everett Phoenix and Lillian Floyd Ketchum purchased the home in 1943. Everett's grandmother, Clara Dwight Ketchum was the daughter of John Dwight, the founder of Arm & Hammer.

Aside from marrying a legacy, Lillian Ketchum was a world-renowned poet Laureate in her own right.

Serving as a summer home used by the Ketchum's to beat the Jacksonville heat, the home was refurbished with artistic style and dubbed by a local paper "a mansion of the arts."

The Ketchums were friends with many well-known politicians and socialites, and they said that five different presidents sat in their dining room, including Hoover and Eisenhower.

In fact, Veteto tells me that the dining room table in the pictures once belonged to Joe Kennedy. He also reports, from stories passed along with the home, that "a silent film star used to do plays with the neighborhood kids in the attic, and the stage is still there."

After the Ketchums died, the home was passed to their daughter Grace Joan Love Schneider who passed away in 1999. In 2003, the current owners Gary and Brendan Ross purchased the impressive historical estate and made it a labor of love.

The home won the Griffin Award for Historic Preservation from the Preservation Society in 2013.

The Rosses are now ready to pass on this luxe history to a new owner for $4.5 million.

Veteto said that his love of historical homes and his successful record of brokering high-end, unique properties were why the owners hired him.

In addition to traditional broker marketing methods, Veteto has hired videographers and worked with several photographers at different times of the year to give potential buyers the best perspective possible.

As for who Veteto sees buying the house, he said, "This home can't be replicated as to location or grandeur so it will be a buyer who appreciates history and a timeless elegance."

Finding the right buyer who will appreciate the rich history of the estate might be the biggest hurdle, as Zillow reports having it on the market for 1,564 days, or a little over four years; realtor.com reports it having been listed on and off since Aug. 2013.

Asheville is also home to historic private home and tourist attraction the Biltmore Estate, built by George Washington Vanderbilt II at the turn of the century.

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