

## BUSINESS

# Troy's Historic Lion Factory digs deep underground to save energy, money

National Grid awarded Regan Development, the owner of the affordable housing complex, \$1 million grant to install geothermal system that heats and cools

By **Larry Rulison**, Staff Writer

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Geothermal energy pumps at Lion Factory apartments in Troy are shown last week. The system uses 90 wells that harness the “constant” temperature underground to heat or cool the individual apartments using heat pumps.

TROY — The Lion Factory is a historic property in the Lansing burgh neighborhood that was once one of the most important garment factories in the post-Civil War era in a municipality that earned the nickname the Collar City.

The hulking 133,000-square-foot symbol of Gilded Age textile manufacturing was built in 1884, and once housed hundreds of workers, most of them women, who made men's shirts and detachable collars for the United Shirt and Collar Co.

The Lion Factory isn't producing shirts and collars anymore, but it is still stitched into the fabric of life in Lansingburgh as an apartment building.

A downstate firm, Regan Development Corp., spent \$60 million remaking the factory building into a 151-unit affordable housing complex, offering discounted rents to income-eligible tenants on a sliding scale.

Examples of eligible tenants would be a single person making between \$30,000 and \$47,000 a year or a family of three with an income between \$40,000 and \$60,000 a year.

The developer earns tax breaks on such projects, while lower-income tenants pay rent at significant discounts. For instance, a mother of a school-age child making \$35,000 a year would pay \$718 in monthly rent for a one-bedroom unit that normally rents for \$1,199. Some apartments are also set aside for special needs tenants with lower income levels.

After a massive rehab project, Regan Development and its property management firm, The Michaels Organization, began leasing apartments this past March. There are now waiting lists for some apartments, which are rented under one-year leases.

Although tenants get free internet service, tenants do have to pay for their electric bills as well as their heating and cooling expenses.

But these tenants don't get a natural gas bill for heating their apartment in the winter. That's because Regan Development installed a \$1.2 million geothermal system.

The geothermal system at the Lion Factory uses 90 wells that harness the “constant” temperature underground to heat or cool the individual apartments using heat pumps. No natural gas is needed for the system.

Paired with energy-efficient appliances, new windows, and a “tight” building envelope, the Lion Factory is also an example of how apartment complexes will have to be built in the future under New York state’s stringent climate change law. The legislation aims to significantly reduce the state’s reliance on fossil fuels.

Regan Development obtained a \$1 million grant from gas-and-electric utility National Grid for the geothermal project under the state’s Clean Heat Program that helps developers transition from designing buildings that use natural gas to those that use geothermal.

“We know fossil fuels are finite so projects like this show what we can do with more innovative solutions to help revitalize a previously vacant, historical structure,” National Grid executive Kim Ireland said.

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