

Feng shui graces Pittsford's purlieus

Consultant in ancient Asian art praises area

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People choose to live in Pittsford for a lot of different reasons: good schools, nice houses, a vibrant business environment.

But does it have good feng shui?

According to Louisa Ong-Lee, the answer is a resounding yes.



Ong-Lee

We asked the feng shui consultant, writer and speaker who works locally and abroad to explain why

she considers Pittsford an auspicious place to live.

She starts her feng shui analysis by pulling out a map of the town and village.

"The land here is rich. I look at where the river meanders. Even the old farm settlers, they would settle on fertile land," says Ong-Lee, whose business is called Feng Shui 8 (in Chinese culture, eight is a lucky number).

Ong-Lee's "river" is really the Erie Canal, which she refers to as the emperor's jade belt.

"It flows from the southeast to the northwest, which is good," says Ong-Lee, who is also pleased with the canal's gentle curve.

"In feng shui we don't like sharp angles. They can bring on tragedy. When a river curves there is a deposit of wealth."

In fact, when Ong-Lee moved



Aimee Jones of Rochester and her children, Lara, 3, and Jesse, 6, enjoy feeding the ducks on the Erie Canal at Schoen Place.

SHAWN DOWD staff photographer

to the Rochester area in 1999 from her native Singapore, her decision to live in Pittsford was because of the town's auspicious alignment of elements. The five feng shui elements are fire, water, earth, wood and metal.

To the uninitiated, feng shui is the ancient Chinese practice of balancing these elements in an environment so that they promote good health, good relationships and success in personal and professional endeavors. It originated as a way to finding good burial sites, Ong-Lee explains.

"It's the science of the land and the placement of rivers, mountains, valleys, and how everything forms one perfect union. Feng shui looks at achieving this sort of balance and everything has a special place and is meant to be," she says.

Ong-Lee likens her work to that of an acupuncturist, in that she tries to open up the lines of chi, or energy, so that the environment where people work and live is in harmony.

"Feng shui is not interior decorating. It balances elements in your home so that your energy

lines are good," she explains.

Ong-Lee and other feng shui practitioners rely on a luopan, or special compass, to generate data about a specific location. The time dimension also factors into feng shui calculations, so a place that has good overall alignment may go through the ups and downs depending on the year. Feng shui operates on a 360-year cycle.

"Your environment controls you to a certain point. And you control the environment to a certain point," says Ong-Lee, which is why it's possible to

thrive in a less-than-ideal location, as long as you balance the elements that are within your control. When a calculation suggests boosting a certain element in a certain spot, shapes and colors can often be used to represent that element.

In Singapore, Taiwan and other parts of Asia populated with ethnic Chinese, feng shui is serious business. Land developers, architects and city planners hire feng shui experts at the beginning of projects; if their opinion of a place is bad, land prices can plummet, says Ong-

Lee. Feng shui used to thrive in mainland China, but the practice was banned during the Maoist regime, and the younger generations are not as familiar with it as their ancestors were, adds Ong-Lee.

The Singapore feng shui master she studied with, Chong Swan Lek, works on "macro-level projects." During her most recent visit to Singapore earlier this month, she accompanied Chong while he consulted with some American banks.

Locally, Ong-Lee consults with private residents who want to sell or improve their house, and businesses that want to make sure their space is set up for prosperity. Ong-Lee has several clients in Pittsford, including Tru Jewellery in the village, and will be one of the speakers at WXXI's Speaking of Women's Health Conference Sept. 19 at the Riverside Convention Center.

Here are more feng shui readings on Pittsford, according to Ong-Lee's calculations:

- The center of town is a good area of growth for the food industry, niche trading and education.

- Eateries and shops along the canal are in a good position to thrive.

- New industrial buildings or shopping zones would do well in Pittsford's western border.

- The northwest sector is a place of rest and would be a good location for new retirement homes or a hospital.

- The eastern, southeastern and northeastern sectors of town are considered auspicious areas through January 2009.

- And lastly, Pittsford should build a memorial in the southern part of the village center, perhaps an animal or flower. "This is important for identity — to attract newcomers and for those who have left to return." □

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