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## Restarting the Restoration Clock

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### Sag Harbor

FOR 31 years, the large brick Bulova watchcase factory has sat empty on a two-acre site a block off Main Street, a graffiti-sprayed monument to the industrial era, which followed the whaling industry as the economic engine of this waterside village.

The last time the building came close to resurrection was in 2008, when a Manhattan company called Cape Advisors was granted zoning and planning board approval to transform it into 65 luxury condominiums. But the financial crisis effectively shelved those plans. It wasn't until last November that Cape Advisors — along with Deutsche Bank, its new partner on the project — began to move ahead in earnest, and crumbling parts of the timber and masonry were torn down. In December, after asbestos was removed and other contaminants were cleaned up, the state ruled that the site was “safe for residential use.”



In the process of what might be considered an archeological expedition, the factory's 1881 granite foundation stone was uncovered last week.

“We are trying to figure out how to design around it now,” said Arthur Blee, the director of design and construction for Cape. He described the building as a “collage,” with various wings added at different times over a 100-year period, yet “remarkably solid” and “in really good shape.”

With 999 arched windows, each three feet wide and seven and a half feet high, the interior of the four-story structure is flooded with light, making it ideal for conversion to apartments, Mr. Blee said. But as a historic restoration and an attempt at adaptive reuse, the factory condominium conversion requires an approach unusual for the Island.

A major focus, said Craig Wood, a principal of Cape, “is keeping the character and the essence of it as an old building,” while integrating the redeveloped site into the “fabric of the community.”

Units are to range from studios to four-bedrooms, with as many as 23 windows apiece. Units on lower floors will have gardens, and balconies will be added to some apartments in the middle. Fourth-floor penthouses will have terraces and views of Peconic Bay, to the north, and Sag Harbor's steeples and rooftops to the south.

In addition, 16 residential units in 9 town houses designed to complement the building will go up on top of a 130-car underground garage, as will a fitness center that architecturally blends in. It will include a swimming pool with a retractable roof.

Buyers are expected to be a mix of year-round and seasonal residents, said David Kronman, the project manager. Prices have not yet been set, but are to exceed \$1 million on most units.

As spring approaches, Mr. Kronman said, “the tempo is increasing.” Excavation is under way, and work has begun on the restoration of the masonry and yellow pine beams in the factory building. One crew, “doing nothing but cleaning old bricks,” has so far scraped the mortar off 20,000 of them. The old granite-walled vaults used to store precious metals are being incorporated into kitchens and bathrooms. Electrical work and other mechanicals will be hidden inside a raised floor system, to preserve the look of the original building.

“We are doing a lot of diligence to make the restoration as accurate and beautiful as we can,” Mr. Kronman said. “You will see and feel the old ceilings, rather than a white box.”

The old smokestack, previously cut off at 65 feet, will be restored and extended 20 feet to its original height; at its base, in a nook off the lobby, a fireplace will be added.

The windows will be energy-efficient while retaining “the look and feel of the original building,” including wooden transoms, Mr. Kronman said, adding, “It’s little details that make the difference.”

A gazebo will be built on the rooftop terrace of a penthouse to replace a water tank that once sat on the roof. A five-foot-tall cornice that wrapped the roofline and jutted out three feet at the top of the building was removed about 50 years ago, but it will be restored as it appears in historical photos.

A block away on Main Street, Lisa Bucking Field, an owner of the Sag Harbor Variety Store 5 & 10, recalled moving here in the late 1960s because her father, Philip Bucking, an engineer, worked for Bulova.

“At that time Sag Harbor was really an industrial village,” Ms. Field said. In 1970, her father left the factory to open the variety store. “All the workers on their lunch break would walk into town,” she recalled. After the factory closed, in 1982, she was still in grammar school when she saw the sign announcing condominiums “coming soon.” For years, however, all that could be seen from the front of the variety store was “a crumbling brick building with boarded-up windows.”

“I am so thrilled now that it is finally going forward,” Ms. Field said. “It is going to bring life back into Sag Harbor village.” She said she hoped that for everyday needs like kitchen gadgets or curtain rods, the new condo owners would visit her store.

Others are skeptical. Bill Chaleff, an architect and planner, lamented the project’s lack of on-site affordable housing, the absence of plans for retail shops or commercial space in the repurposed factory, and a “ratcheting of a whole region toward serving the needs of the second-home community.”

Mayor Brian Gilbride, who recalled working in the factory’s polishing department briefly after high school, said the restoration would ensure that the “condos will become part of Sag Harbor’s future history.”

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