

The Sag Harbor Express.

April 10, 2013

Townhouses Rise at Watchcase

Posted on 10 April 2013



By Kathryn G. Menu

About a month ago, Church and Sage streets in Sag Harbor began evolving in a way that will change their streetscapes forever, as the construction of nine luxury townhouses began to take shape, connected to what is arguably the largest construction project in village history.

While construction at the former Bulova Watchcase Factory has largely been focused on the restoration of the historic factory building, which is being converted into 47 luxury condominiums, the framing of the townhouses over the course of the last month has highlighted their role in the development of a once forsaken property into a luxury development coined Watchcase featuring multi-million condominiums.

Currently, much of the framing in the first four homes is close to finished along Sage Street, said David Kronman, a partner with Cape Advisors who has helped oversee the project since its infancy. Once those are close to being completely framed out, development will begin along Church Street.

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The townhouses, which were designed by Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and project architect Baldassano Architecture, are based on a variety of architectural styles found in Sag Harbor during the 18th and 19th centuries. The townhouses alone will host 17 units, a house unit in each facing the street and eight bungalow units facing the interior gardens of the Watchcase property.



“The house designs are not reproductions of architecture from any specific period, but they employ a variety of vernacular building elements that touch on architecture throughout the village’s history,” said Kronman.

While drawing on historic elements may be what Cape Advisors hopes will allow the townhouses to retain an authentic, Sag Harbor aesthetic,

the interiors — designed by Steven Gambrel who is responsible for interior design throughout the whole of the project — will be outfitted with modern luxury in mind, said Kronman, with high ceilings and modern amenities as well as direct accessibility to concierge services, a fitness center and spa.

“This may be for someone who is looking for a Sag Harbor home in the historic district and walking distance to the village, but one that offers turn key living, a maintenance free lifestyle,” he added.

The house units will vary from four to six bedrooms and 3,000 to 4,800 square feet, while the bungalow units will range from 1,000 to 1,350 square feet and will feature one to two bedrooms. They will feature terraces and garden patios, but also access to the heated saltwater pool and an underground parking garage, which will provide parking for all residents within the Watchcase development. The units — bungalow and house units — will range in price from \$800,000 to over \$6 million.

According to Arthur Blee, director of design and construction for Cape Advisors, the firm hopes to have the entire project completed by Memorial Day of 2014, but the exteriors of the townhouses should be completed by the end of this summer. While the framing lining Sage Street is impossible to ignore — that section of street long inhabited by concrete and fencing around the rear of the aging factory

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building — Blee said it will only be when the windows, siding and shingles are added that the true character of the streetscape will emerge.

“The design breaks up the façade on the street,” said Kronman.

In other news out of the Watchcase project, on Tuesday night, the Sag Harbor Village Board of Trustees agreed to issue a building permit for the Watchcase Factory Development and waive the additional \$206,575 fee.

According to a resolution drafted by village attorney Fred W. Thiele, Jr., this is a renewal of the original building permit, which expired in April.

On Tuesday, Thiele said when the village sets a fee it is meant to simply cover the cost of administrative services needed to cover village operations as it related to that specific project. When these fees are viewed as a revenue source, Thiele noted that becomes more of a tax on an applicant, which is illegal.



“In this case, the fee was already collected is more than sufficient,” said Thiele, who noted he had already met with building inspector Tim Platt to discuss the matter.