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THE HIGH END

## Hampton Bays Builds Waterfront Luxury

A townhouse development and a refurbished inn are poised to bracket the Shinnecock Canal and provide a “renewed gateway into the Hamptons.”

By **Marcelle Sussman Fischler**

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A revitalized historic inn and a new luxury townhouse community on opposite banks of Long Island’s Shinnecock Canal are poised to bolster a resurgence in Hampton Bays, a hamlet in the western part of the Hamptons once considered its stepchild.

Last month, 12 years after Gregg and Mitchell Rechler, developers who are cousins and comanaging partners in Plainview, N.Y.-based Rechler Equity, began seeking approvals, ground was broken on the canal’s western bank for the restoration of the Canoe Place Inn. A stagecoach shop when the town of Southhampton (which encompasses Hampton Bays) was established in 1640, the inn was frequented by Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Delano Roosevelt in its heyday, according Brenda Berntson, president of the Hampton Bays Historical and Preservation Society. Shuttered since 2009, its last incarnation was as a nightclub.

Across the canal, which connects Peconic Bay to the north and Shinnecock Bay and the Atlantic Ocean to the south, the Rechlers recently began building the Hampton Boathouses, a development of 37 three-story luxury townhouses, priced from \$1.5 to \$3 million, including 20 boat slips and floating docks. The site, at the intersection of North Road and Montauk Highway, had been home to Tide Runners, a restaurant popular among boaters.

Gregg Rechler called the high-end townhouses and the inn renovation “two

transformative projects that will enhance the waterfront along the Shinnecock canal and serve as the renewed gateway into the Hamptons.”

The Rechlers’ original plan was to demolish the Canoe Place Inn and build 70 high-end units in its place, but it ran into strong community opposition and sparked what Ms. Berntson called a “nasty, nasty fight.” So they swapped the development rights over to the boathouse site and ultimately reduced a plan for 45 townhouses down to 37. To gain the necessary permits and approvals, the Rechlers also agreed to restore the inn “and bring it to a place it could be used by the public,” Mr. Rechler said. They are also investing \$300,000 to refurbish a park between the inn and the canal.

Together, the inn and boathouse projects will cost about \$110 million and are expected to be completed in 2020.

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The Hamptons Boathouses are designed to resemble large Hamptons shingle-style manor homes with gambrel roofs. The two- and three-bedroom units, which range from 1,500 square feet to nearly 2,900 square feet, will have gas fireplaces in the step-down living rooms, marble baths with free-standing tubs, private patios, balconies and water views. The development will include valet services for boaters, a heated saltwater outdoor pool, a library, a gym and two massage rooms. Poolside drinks and wrap sandwiches will be provided by Manhattan-based Backal Hospitality Group, which is also running the inn, Mr. Rechler said.



The two- and three-bedroom units, which range from 1,500 square feet to nearly 2,900 square feet, will have private patios, balconies and water views. Rechler Equity Partners

In the past two years, “Hampton Bays has been transitioning,” Mr. Rechler said, calling the onetime working-class area “the new Brooklyn to Manhattan.”

Price records are being set on waterfront properties, said Enzo Morabito, an associate broker with Douglas Elliman, which has the Hamptons Boathouse listing. “The hipsters have discovered it,” he said.

Though restaurants abound, there is no catering hall. The renovated inn will include catering facilities for 350, a restaurant and lounge, 20 luxury guest rooms, and five rebuilt two- and three-bedroom guest cottages on the nearly six-acre site.

The Canoe Place Inn, believed to be the oldest inn site in the nation, was occupied by British officers during the Revolutionary War. The building burned down in 1921 and was rebuilt the following year, Ms. Berntson said. While the inn is not on a historic register, “historically, it is representative of our past,” Ms. Berntson said. Al Smith, the former New

York governor, and the actors Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz rented cabins on the property. “It was the heart of our village,” she said, “a place to go to for social events.”

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In the 1970s, the inn became a nightclub. Known variously as Peaches, the Coliseum and the Oak Beach Inn, “it drew 2,000 patrons on Saturday nights during the season,” Mr. Rechler said.

That wasn’t necessarily a good thing. “There was a lot of noise and people weren’t happy with the crowds,” Ms. Berntson said.

The new Canoe Place Inn “will bring an economic boost to Hampton Bays and vastly improve the easternmost section of town,” said Susan Von Freddi, owner of Village Real Estate and a member of the Suffolk County Downtown Advisory Board, which dispenses grants to help improve downtowns. Beyond weddings and parties, local civic groups “need places to go and have meetings. Having a 350-seat catering place, we don’t have to go out of town.”

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