

Klar swims against the tide to rescue Patchogue condos

Development, abandoned by cash-starved owner, left unfinished

By DAVID WINZELBERG

After languishing half-finished for several months, a Patchogue condominium development has been revived by East Meadow-based Klar Organization, its new owners.

First built in 2008 by the Christopher Cos., the 35-home community called Riverview on the Patchogue River had trouble attracting buyers and got caught in a recessionary housing market. Already financed to the hilt by the Bank of Smithtown, the builder ran out of cash and stopped work on the site.

As a result, some of the 14 homeowners that bought condos there ended up living next to hollow building frames and piles of construction debris.

But where most saw a failed investment, the Klar Organization saw opportunity. Company chief Steven Klar said he made a deal with the bank and the Glen Head-based Christopher Cos. and bought the development for "a better price," although he declined to give a figure.

Klar said he's had to rebuild a lot of the unfinished units, some of which had leaks



Finished townhouse sits next to hollow building frames at Riverview on the Patchogue River.

from being exposed to the elements. The company has also paid more than \$1 million to construction contractors who Klar said were left hanging by the previous developer. He's also taken care of homeowner complaints about plumbing problems and maintenance issues.

"They would have been in limbo if we didn't save the project," Klar said.

Things are already looking up for

Riverview. Ten of the homes were in contract when Klar bought the property, which leaves 11 left for sale at prices reduced as much as 30 percent. A two-bedroom unit starts at \$399,000 and a three-bedroom starts at \$429,000.

Patchogue Mayor Paul Pontieri praised the Christopher Cos. for "putting together a beautiful project" and for building a sewer line for Riverview that other homes have

now tapped into.

"That helps the environment and the health of the river," Pontieri said.

The mayor said he was glad a "big-time developer" like Klar is now piloting the project.

Riverview features 35 Victorian-style townhouses with water views in seven buildings where the Patchogue River meets the Great South Bay. Riverview has 22 boat slips on the river and an easement to ensure public access to the water. The three-story homes have up to 2,600 square feet of living space, two or three bedrooms, 2 ½ baths, one-car garages and they're within walking distance of the Patchogue Long Island Rail Road station.

This isn't the first project that Klar has ridden into on a white horse. The company has rescued other stalled or underperforming residential developments in recent years, like the Links in North Hills and Lakebridge in Kings Park. And Klar said there will be more distressed properties to look at after the venture.

"This is not the end in resurrecting projects," he said. "Unfortunately, it's a sign of the times."

Meanwhile, Klar said he's building the rest of Riverview and expects all the units will have sold by the middle of next year.

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