



The Columns

While the Captain Obed Baker III house in Dennis, Massachusetts has a proud and storied past, it has remained dormant for decades since the 1980s and has fallen into serious disrepair over the years. The once unique and elegant testament to the status and prosperity of early sea captains had devolved from icon to eyesore in the community and to visiting tourists. The neglected and rapidly deteriorating Columns was also hard to miss on busy Rte. 28 through Dennis, casting a negative light on all of Dennis.

While many longtime residents of Dennis recall The Columns in its heyday as a fine-dining restaurant and popular venue for jazz concerts and dancing, suggestions to turn back the clock and perhaps revive The Columns as an entertainment destination were deemed unfeasible. One or two earlier efforts to restore and relaunch the historic mansion as a multi-family condominium development also failed due to lack of town-sanctioned funding or environmental restrictions.

Recently, Columns Development, Inc. LLC entered the picture with a plan to carefully restore the historic charm and features of the more than 160-year-old Greek Revival mansion, while creating a plan that would also serve the cultural and civic needs of the Dennis community. The first step was to assemble a team consisting of a contractor, architects, carpenters, and workers who resided on the Cape or were frequent visitors and therefore familiar with the cultural sensitivities and quirks of the region. Then, develop a plan that would breathe new life into the magnificent structure created and maintained by Capt. Obed Baker and his descendants so many years ago. The ability to self-fund the project was also a plus since it eliminates any potential roadblocks.

As restoration activities progressed, it was clear that what was once a potential demolition and vacant lot would be the rebirth of a historic landmark. Since developers painstakingly restored or replicated external and internal features of the home it would be a vibrant part of the cultural history of Dennis and Massachusetts, as well as symbol of 19th Century architecture and lifestyles. The Columns – soon to be renamed The Dennis Columns – will also have a civic and social impact since the goal is to provide much-needed housing on the Cape. Once completed, the development will offer 16 residential units – five in the mansion and 11 ‘coastal cottages’ or townhouses circling the main building.

These homes are key to the developer’s self-funding strategy but also play a big role in providing homes for current residents and attracting more full-time people to the Cape. Four of these units will also be deeded affordable to help eliminate financial roadblocks for individuals and families.

Finally, the development and rebirth of The Columns has a psychological impact as well. Everyone who lives on the Cape knows there is a delicate balance between providing new housing and maintaining an environmental open space balance. As planned development of the 11 coastal cottages comes together and moves toward completion in early 2027, the developers hope to create landscaping that is both aesthetically and environmentally correct and seamlessly integrates with the 11 acres of surrounding protected land. The objective of every aspect of The Columns development is a seamless harmony between history, culture, and civic responsibilities.