

BACKBAY TOWNHOUSE BOASTS NEW HOMES

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On the waterside of Beacon Street, between Clarendon and Dartmouth, a five-story brownstone with bay windows on both the front and rear facades is undergoing a dramatic redevelopment, transforming a once distinctive and elegant mansion in to three magnificent homes.

The Stonegate Group LLC, led by Sean McGrath, and the Feldman Development Partners, headed by Richard Feldman, are working together on this project.

"It's a total gut-rehab job," says Feldman during a recent hard-hat tour of the building, which currently is obscured by scaffolding.

Michelle, DeAngelis and Bill Packard of the Itzkan and Marchiel Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage office are marketing the three homes, which start at \$2.25 million.

Most recently, the building had been a warren of apartments, but its architectural bones were absolutely fine. It was designed by and built for John Hubbard Sturgis of Sturgis & Brigham in 1863. Sturgis was a well known architect who studied in Great Britain and returned to Boston, where he designed the Church of the Advent on the Flat of Beacon Hill as well as the Museum of Fine Arts' first home that stood in Copley Square.

Today, another noted Boston-based architectural firm, Ahearn-Schopfer and Associates, has designed three very special, floor-through residences, each occupying two floors. Working with Patrick Ahearn, the project architect is Diane Lim. She has worked with Stonegate on several other luxury Back Bay developments that were completed during the past three years, including 9 Arlington St, and 15 Marlboro St. the newest team venture is located at 48 Commonwealth Ave., at the corner of Berkeley Street. The general contractor is Metric Construction.

The building itself at 212 Beacon St. features a side hall floor plan, which offers a maximum of living space that cannot be accomplished with a center entrance. However, the asymmetrical entry beneath a porch that runs the width of the building is far from being visually jarring; it's comfortable, and you step into a large foyer that will have a marble entrance hall with paneled wainscoting and crown moldings.

A new elevator with keyed access will be installed as well. "It's a Kone elevator," explains Feldman. "It's a 'machine-room-less' elevator that is electronically controlled and as a result it is very quiet," This trackless type of elevator, which will have a stone floor, also will be used at 48 Commonwealth Ave. as well as at another development under construction in the South End at the former Boston Penny Savings Bank on Washington Street, he says.

Unit 1, which is listed at \$20295 million, is called the patio unit because it will have a large private deck constructed above a new four-car garage that will open onto Back Street, which a private way, and a garden-level brick patio.

This residence, like the others, is oriented toward the Charles River. The view is unobstructed, save for Storrow Drive and fully leafed trees along the Esplanade and the lagoon.

A study will be at the front of the building, but the living room/dining room, which will have a gas fireplace with a black marble hearth and surround, will have the delightful river views. The windows on this level are 8 feet tall and in perfect proportion to the 14-foot ceiling, which will feature deep crown molding.

The kitchen will be organized in the middle of the unit and will include high-end appliances—a stainless steel Sub-Zero refrigerator, and Electrolux dishwasher and gas range with a wide Gaggenau stainless steel vent hood, plus a build-in GE Profile microwave. Custom-built glazed maple cabinetry with raised panel will offer plenty of storage space, and halogen task lighting beneath the wall cabinets will brighten the workspace of the polished granite.

On the garden level, the front bedroom has a private entry beneath the stairs, next to a garden. The guest bathroom will be tiled with Carrara marble and include a glass-enclosed shower. At the rear of the building will be a generously sized master bedroom. **The master bathroom will include two sinks set in a long marble vanity, a glass-enclosed shower and a Kohler soaking tub and toilet.

On the parlor level, which is typically the best-appointed floor in mid 19th century homes because this is where homeowner entertained their guests, the ceiling height is just as extraordinary as that in Unit 1. Unit 2 is listed for \$2.75 million.

Tall bay windows in the dining area or family room will offer delightful views of the Back Bay streetscape while the bay windows of the living room will provide sweeping views of the river. The kitchen will be similarly outfitted. Tucked beneath the stairs, however, will be an L-shaped pantry. “As you go along, you discover new space,” Feldman says.

The space within these units is well designed, and at the top of the interior staircase in Unit 2 will be a laundry with a stacked washer and dryer, and the his-and-her walk-in closets will be roomy without taking away from the size of the master bedroom. A shallow closet in the hallway has been designed just to hold shoes.

The most magnificent residence, of course, will be the penthouse, offered at \$3.25 million, where the prime living space will occupy the top floor and the bedrooms will be on the lower level. The master bath will be quite large, and in addition to accommodating a long marble vanity with two under-mounted sinks, there will be room opposite it that can hold a dressing table or another piece of furniture. The second bedroom will include an en suite bath with an over-sized glass-enclosed shower.

The walls on the top floor are angled because of the mansard roof, which is slate. There are two skylights in the living room, which will face the river, and one skylight in the dining/family room. Another set of stairs carries you to the mahogany roof deck, which possesses a 360 degree panoramic view of the Back Bay and Beacon Hill, the river and the Cambridge waterside that extends westward to Harvard. The deck will have water service and several electrical outlets to ensure convenience for those après theater summer evenings or a Sunday morning brunch.

Said McGrath: “This is another example of Stonegate identifying a property that has great potential. It was a 15-room rooming house, for better or worse, and we are creating three duplexes with garage parking and spectacular views of the Charles River.” He said the residences would be ready for occupancy in mid-December.