

The Hamptons

A bold new concept becomes a reality

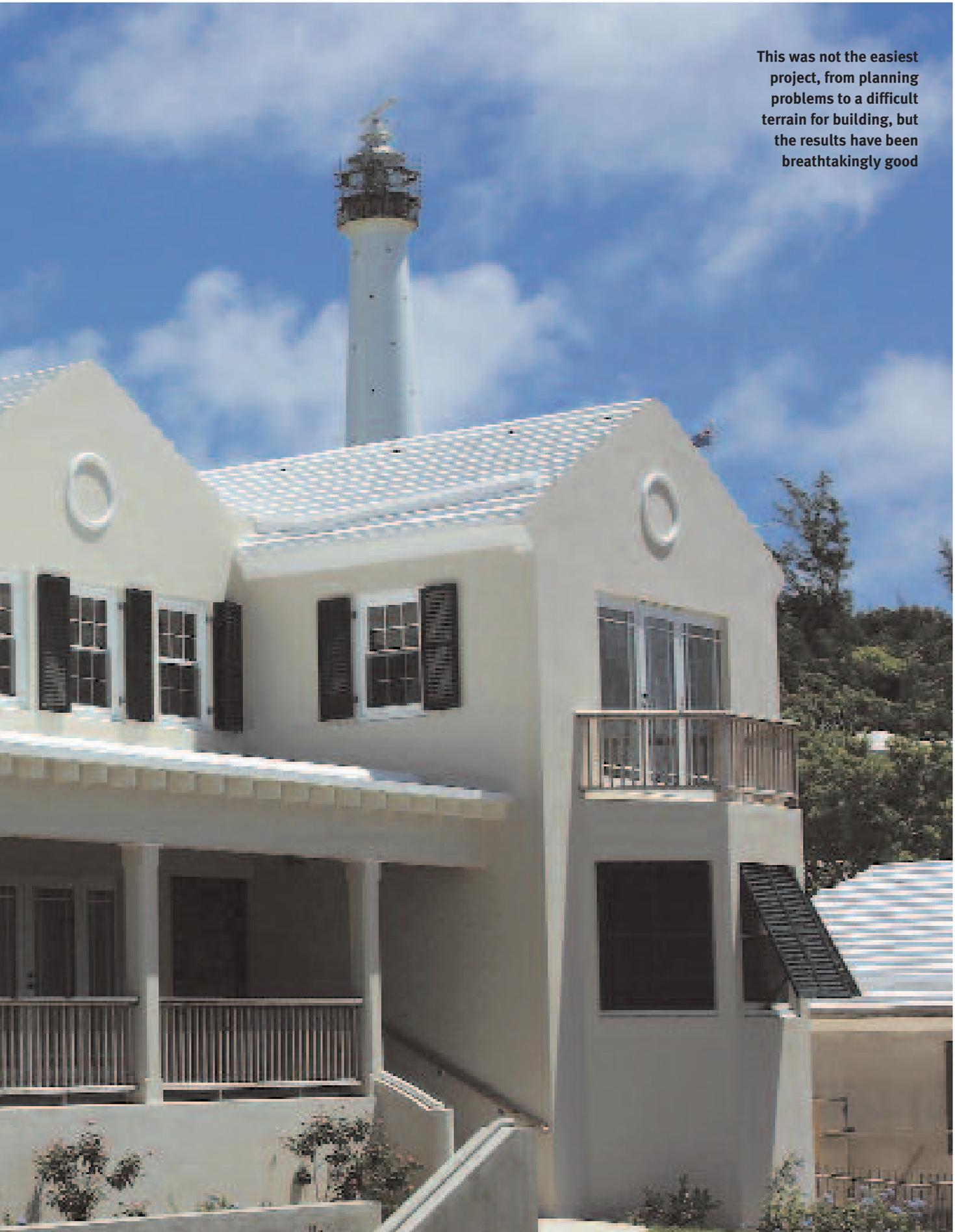
BY SARA WESTHEAD

Building homes in Bermuda requires a delicate balance of managing the costs of construction while providing appealing,

affordable residences that will sell when completed. In fact, the process is almost a gamble. Fortunately for the owners of WhiteCross Development, that gamble is paying off with

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This was not the easiest project, from planning problems to a difficult terrain for building, but the results have been breathtakingly good



The steeply-sloping land allowed for stunning South Shore views for everyone

their new community, The Hamptons, located on St Anne's Road in Southampton.

When completed, the property will feature 20 single-family homes and eight terraced townhouses.

"It's been a long process," explained Germano Botelho of Bothelho-Wood Architects. "It's probably been about 10 years [in the making]."

The development was originally a project under Kevin Petty and his firm, Somers Realty. However, other development projects soon proved to be more time consuming, and the property changed hands to WhiteCross, explains WhiteCross's President, Kevin Cross.

Mr Botelho inherited the design task from his business partner, Ted Wood, in 2003, at which point there was still nothing at the site.

"At my first visit, it was all Mexican pepper and other undesirable vegetation," explains Mr Botelho. In fact, the only work that had been done on the site were some preliminary borehole tests. "Southampton is known as being pretty sandy," he adds.

The ultimate goal of the developer

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was to create a neighbourhood of affordable homes for upper-middle-income families.

"It was basically addressing the needs of the people [in Bermuda]," Mr Botelho says. "What are people looking for? That was the determining factor."

"We made several very key changes to the plans, mainly turning the detached homes from two-bedroom homes to three-bedroom homes, which I saw as a market that was in high demand with little supply at the time," Mr Cross explains.

Several different home plans were designed to add variety to the site. Most of the homes feature three bedrooms, living room, dining room,

kitchen, laundry/storage area, study/office and a verandah that overlooks the South Shore.

Planning permission for the development proved to be the biggest challenge, particularly due to objections of concerned nearby residents.

"The project was a leader in providing denser housing to the Bermudian buyer, which is the way of the future in order to have sustainable development," Mr Cross says. "Even though the project density is not even close to the allowable minimum density, the neighbours fought it tooth and nail."

The problem arose because construction was concentrated on a portion of the 12-acre property, rather than spread out, making it appear denser than it truly was.

"Only 4.5 acres was built on, with the remaining eight acres left protected under a section 34 agreement," Mr Cross points out. "So, if you look at the 4.5 acres, it appears dense; however, if you look at the 12.5 acres, the project is not dense at all. This transfer of density to allow for the conservation of green space had not been used very much if at

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all in Bermuda. The Hamptons broke very important ground with this concept.

"It took years to finally win planning approval for something that was clearly within the zoning rights of the property. This delay obviously and needlessly increased the cost of the project, and this had to be passed on to consumers."

In the end, WhiteCross won against the objectors with carefully designed architectural and infrastructural plans that met each concern, providing much needed housing while preserving green space.

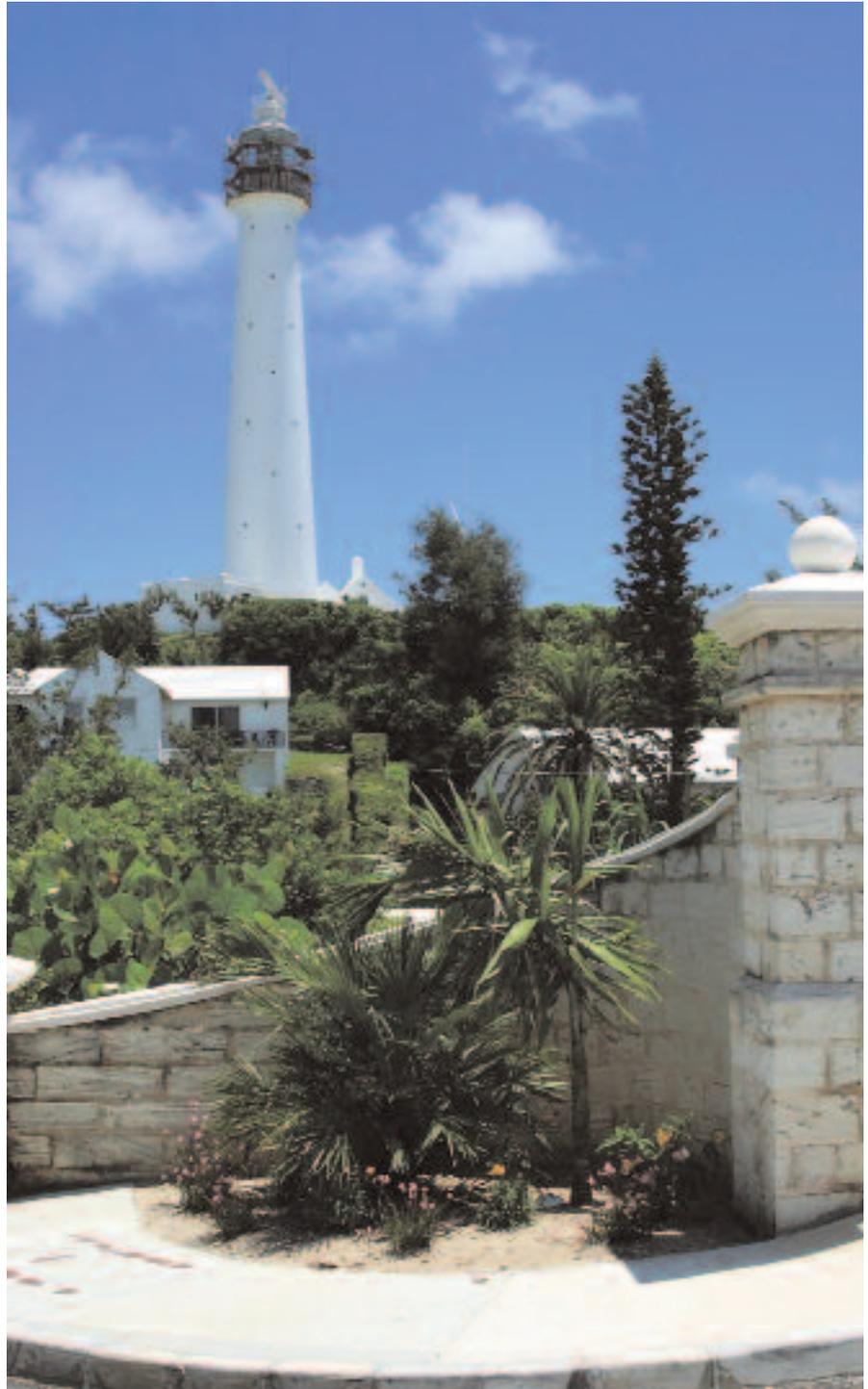
WhiteCross has also coped well with the financial aspects. According to Mr Cross: "The cost budget for the project is in excess of \$32 million but we are ahead of budget and ahead of the project timeline, mainly due to a credible, experienced and dedicated development team."

Construction has been divided into three stages, the first of which was started in January 2004 and included seven detached homes. Each of these homes has an entrance from the ground level. The second phase, consisting of nine homes, has almost been completed. Each of these homes has an entry on the upper level.

Work on phase three commenced in January 2006 and includes the last four detached homes and the eight terraced townhouses. The townhouses were 80% complete at presstime and the foundation of two of the four detached homes had already been poured.

Mike MacLean, General Manager for M&M Construction, has overseen much of the project with help from his Project Manager, Craig Booth. The company won the project through tender.

The site offered a unique challenge in the gradient of the land, which



Special care was taken to landscape The Hamptons luxuriantly

ranges from 116 feet to 184 feet above sea level. That allowed each home to have a spectacular view of the South Shore but also made construction difficult.

"It was challenging, but technology nowadays gives you the upper hand," explains Mr MacLean.

"Most of the foundations had to be dug pretty deep and the rock was not as hard as normal, leading to banks and rock cuts collapsing before being rein-

forced. Most of the spaces we just cut bigger than normal to ensure people's safety. We tried to open it up and get foundations poured as quickly as possible.

"The majority of the foundation challenges were not so much with the homes themselves, but in laying the infrastructure of the property. Once we got the foundations laid, it was pretty

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straightforward.”

The elevation also gave some concern to the Department of Planning. Stepped retaining walls run parallel from the top of the hill to the bottom. In fact, there are more than 2,500 linear feet of retaining walls in phases one and two alone.

Homes constructed in the first two phases feature about 2,700 interior square feet and verandahs of approximately 300 square feet. The last four properties that are being built are 2,643 square feet (interior) with 507 square feet of verandahs.

The terraced townhouses are somewhat smaller but also feature three bedrooms as well as a large garage below. They each have an interior space of about 2,087 square feet and 110 square feet of verandah. The garages are approximately 428 square feet.

The largest home on the property features four bedrooms and is 3,937 square feet inside, with a 345 square foot garage and 568 square feet of verandah.

The woodland will remain as is, undeveloped, but WhiteCross Development is considering different possibilities for the arable land. It is currently being used as a sod farm and nursery for maturing the plants that are being added across the property.

Landscaping at the development has been left in the capable hands of Malcolm Griffith of Malcolm Griffith Landscape Design.

“He has created unique garden areas and terraces throughout the project,” says Mr Cross. “The changes in elevation proved very difficult and were met with clever combinations of timber retaining walls, swails and plant material. Mr Griffith always keeps an eye out for long-term maintenance costs, by keeping access paths and using plant material that will thrive in the windy and sunny environment at The Hamptons. The landscaping gives one the feeling of being in a lush garden.” All of the plants used on the property were purchased in advance of being planted and were nurtured at the onsite nursery.

“It has been a good experience,” Mr MacLean says of the relationships on the site. “I’ve learned a lot from Kevin Cross, and he’s learned some from us