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Company ticks toward its grand opening

By [Richard Conn/Daily News Staff](#)

GHS

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WALTHAM — Passkey International, an online group hotel reservation system, will be the first tenant in the Watch Factory development on Crescent Street.

The company will move from its location in Quincy and open up new offices in a roughly 20,000-square-foot space at the Watch Factory in April 2009, said Eric Ekman, project manager for Berkeley Investments, developer for the Watch Factory.

The 400,000-square-foot complex used to be home to the Waltham Watch Company. It opened in 1854 and remained there for a century. The company became the first watch manufacturer in the world to mass produce a complete watch under one roof.

Construction started on the first phase of the Watch Factory in May, which when completed will feature a total of 166,000 square feet of office space. Ekman said yesterday that there is "a lot of interest" in the remaining office spaces, but no other leases as of yet have been signed.

A second phase of the development will feature 96 loft-style apartments, retail, a restaurant and a cafe/deli, Ekman said. A fitness center will be built which both office and retail tenants, and apartment residents can use.

The first phase will also include more than 535 surface parking spaces for the office portion of the development.

Ekman said that an exhibit detailing the history of the Watch Company will be featured in the initial phase of the Watch Factory. He said Berkeley is working with the Charles River Museum of Industry and the Waltham Historical Society to create the exhibit.

Ekman said the office portion of the development would appeal more to companies who favor the open layout that the Watch Factory will provide. The building will feature sandblasted brick walls and exposed wood ceilings.

"I think it's more for businesses that can appreciate the brick and beam type atmosphere," Ekman said.

Passkey International will move into the Watch Factory about a month before the entire 166,000-square-foot office portion of the development is completed, in May 2009.

"The site was chosen after an extended search across the Route 128 corridor," said Greg Pesi, president and CEO of Passkey in a press release. "We chose the Watch Factory because it offered the optimal mix of amenities, short commute times, the 'brick and beam' feel, and it's location allows us to recruit from a larger pool of technology professionals."

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