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## “ALL TRESSED UP”

VaZa is a nod to the first names of Val Tana and Zamira Cutra, the women behind Ossining’s new style destination.

Capitalizing on Cutra’s business background and Tana’s experience in the beauty industry, VaZa opened its doors in November.

And the sisters will not only get your tresses in top shape, but do so in a onetime bank they transformed into chic surroundings. “Everything that we did in the salon was oriented to details,” Tana says. That is clear from the moment one enters the salon – or rather before one enters. An email system handily confirms your appointment (and sends a thank you, sometimes arriving before you even get back to your car). You’ll be warmly greeted, offered a beverage and led to one of two spacious changing rooms where you slip into your gown. You can pause in the sleek waiting area before your consultation. Then, it’s on to the shampoo beds (more on that in a bit) for a wash, condition and finally, a scalp massage that will transport you to another place. When it’s time for the service, whether it’s a cut, color or a simple blow-out, it’s all about your needs. What are you looking for? What do you like? And when you’re getting color, instead of staring at yourself in the mirror as you wait, you can move over to the “conversation table,” fashioned from reclaimed wood perched above a pair of vintage sewing machines to use your computer, read a magazine or simply zone out to the music. The VaZa vibe is so laid-back that Cutra says when customers are done they sometimes “just say ‘I want to just sit a minute and relax.’” Cutra and Tana, both Westchester residents, had searched for the perfect spot to launch their longtime dream and found it in the street-level space on Main Street. The long-vacant former home of the Ossining National Bank, which occupied a 19th-century building renovated in 1908, simply captivated the women. They were charmed, Cutra says, by “first and foremost, this corner location. The columns. The character to all the buildings in this area.” And that character – embodied by marble columns, oversize windows and exposed brick walls – has been preserved rather than pushed aside.

“The columns existed. The windows existed. We just kind of had to bring everything back to life,” Cutra says. “I felt like we were the right people to show it some love.” The process from initial idea through opening day took nearly 15 months. They signed the contract in June and went through the permit process, working with an architect. Nine weeks of intense construction – everything from a new HVAC system to flooring – was completed to their exacting standards. “You have one shot to do it the right way,” Cutra says. And that extended to even the smallest touches, such as handbag hooks designed to hold the heaviest of purses. “My biggest thing is every woman should have someplace to put their bag,” Tana says. Other elements have a bigger impact, such as the shampoo beds from France that add a dramatic and luxurious touch. “They took six months to get here,” Cutra says, adding they not only feel great but also help align your spine and release tension.

Having renovated in a way that preserved so many vintage details, it’s no surprise that a dedication to the green approach is important to Tana and Cutra. VaZa proudly carries Surface products, which are made with sustainably harvested ingredients and certified organic botanicals. “We really believe in everything that they stand for and our customers can relate to that, too,” Tana says. Though Cutra admits running a green salon can be a challenge, “We really love that challenge.” Even small touches, such as ceramic mugs rather than disposable cups, are implemented. When it comes to services, VaZa does everything from a child’s first haircut to a dramatic up-do for a special event to men’s styling. DevaCurl products give a hint to the emphasis on curly hair at VaZa, a specialty of Tana’s perfected during her early training in Manhattan.

“I have my own spin,” she says, noting she likes to cut curly hair dry and in its natural state. “We like to call it ‘The VaZa Curly Cut.’”

As she explains, “Cutting the hair dry allows you to see the curl pattern and the shape of the hair as you are cutting it.” Other popular services, she adds, include the celebrity-favorite Balayage. It is, she says, “a hair painting technique from France used to create natural looking, sun-kissed highlights that are low maintenance.”

### LOOKING AHEAD

The sisters say that they look forward to being a part of Ossining’s downtown revitalization.

“Ossining is a true gem in Westchester County, a hidden gem,” Cutra says. “We’re really excited to be here.” With a grand opening set for April 10, the coming wedding and prom seasons and the expansion into makeup application, VaZa’s calendar is filling up quickly. But the focus, Tana and Cutra agree, is constant. As Cutra says, “We want to make people look and feel good.”

-Mary Shustack