

THE REAL DEAL

February 2005

Luxe Designers Reflect

West Street project mirrors Meier's affection for glass facades

By Melissa Dehncke-McGill

Glass facades are mirroring global design trends in Manhattan, replacing cement and brick frames with conventional windows, providing apartments with more light and perhaps inadvertently giving an immediate answer to passers-by who might wonder, "What's it like to live there?"

Following on the heels of the Richard Meier-designed Perry Street towers and The Related Companies' Astor Place project, the newest reflective high-end condo development will be at 423 West Street, on the new Gold Coast of the West Village. The 23.5-foot-wide, 10-story tower, which is on its way to completion, sits between Perry and West 11th streets and has been dubbed Hudson Blue by developer Horizen Global.

Occupants of the project will look out of floor-to-ceiling windows at commanding views of the Hudson River from the second to the top floor. Since it's just across from the Hudson River Park, there's little chance those river views will be disturbed, according to the developer.

Dan Cobleigh, Horizen vice president of design and construction, said the building, on the former site of the Pit Stop, a local repair garage, will bring in a more updated aesthetic, in line with the nearby Meier towers, which have grabbed headlines for both design and prices.

The intent was to capture the greatest sweep of views available, and the heating and cooling system was installed for unobstructed sightlines. "Most sliver lots have one exposure, but because our property is 15 feet forward, we also have 15 feet of southern exposure," said Cobleigh.

Horizen chief executive Michael Yanko said the materials used will allow for larger vistas and help maintain privacy. "Different glass has been used to compensate for the sun and shade hitting the building, allowing a wider radius view from the inside, ensuring that nobody can see in," he said.

Yanko said Hudson Blue's offering plan will be available by the beginning of February. The building's sales and marketing agent, Corcoran's Shlomi Rouveni, said there has already been plenty of buyer interest.

"We don't even have a sign on the building and we've been getting a lot of phone calls," he said.

The relatively small project will include a half-dozen two-bedroom apartments as well as a pair of duplex apartments with three bedrooms each. Buyers will have their choice as to whether they want high-end finishes or raw space.

"As opposed to bigger buildings like Morton Square, this will be an exceptionally exclusive eight-unit condo, which will probably end up being four to five units total, since some people will buy more than one apartment for duplexes," said Yanko. "We are giving amenities such as a private chef in the cellar with a common kitchen making food for the weekend, and I'm actually subsidizing the chef for the first year as part of the attraction. You could not do this in a 200-unit building."

While the design has some trendy cachet, it doesn't have the status-symbol clout of brand-name architecture. But Cobleigh said he's not worried, and that he believes that people buy brand-name architects to impress their friends.

"Although we don't have a world famous architect on our payroll, the buyers in our building are impressed with their own status, and believe 'my own eyes can tell me it's good.'"

Cobleigh acknowledged that there is a strong movement among the current population in the area to curb the new development that is bringing in a different aesthetic, at least for a while.

"The residents need time to digest it before they accept that this is the new direction," he said. "People want to be heard, and so much has been forced on them so quickly that they need time to recover."

However, curtain walls are here to stay, the architecturally trained Cobleigh said.

"In Europe it's been around for 20 years," he said. "We are businessmen not altruists, but we believe in contributing to the advancement of design."

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