



PWC hospitality speakers advise invest and grow in NYC and beyond

December 12, 2011 - Design / Build

"We feel that New York City fundamentals are excellent. The market remains strong...and occupancy is very good," said Naomi Mirsky, director of capital projects, finance, Denihan Hospitality Group, echoing the positive prognosis for the hospitality industry in Manhattan - and beyond - as expressed by the speakers at the Hospitality Forum recently presented by Professional Women in Construction (PWC). Lois Weiss, real estate reporter for The New York Post, originated PWC's series of forums and reprised her role as moderator for the breakfast program at the General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen.

The strategy of Denihan, a third generation business that owns and/or manages 13 high-end boutique hotels in NYC, Chicago, Washington D.C. and Miami is, "To invest and grow into key U.S. urban centers," said Mirsky. With "key strengths in the Manhattan market," the firm owns/manages such Big Apple hotels as The Surrey; Affinia Shelburne; James SoHo; The Benjamin; and Affinia Manhattan.

She stressed the value of partnering with construction, design and vendor companies to "achieve the beautiful, interesting spaces appropriate to the location and the guest."

Ron Kollar, chief design officer with Tishman Hotel & Realty LP, a New York-based developer, owner and operator of hotel properties, said that THR's current portfolio of owned assets consists of over 6,000 hotel rooms, plus meeting space, retail area, and restaurants and lounges

He credited Tishman Hotel's working in close collaboration with the hotel operator and the design team for its ability to "come up with the most creative solutions." He offered an example at the InterContinental New York Times Square, where a zoning setback restriction was transformed into a courtyard "viewing garden" that became a beautiful focal point for the lobby and restaurant.

Kollar noted that the Intercontinental was designed and built with all New York consultants. The company is planning to do a guest room renovation at the Westin New York at Times Square, and has performed renovations at various sites including two at Walt Disney World and one at the Wyndham Rio Mar Beach Resort & Spa in Puerto Rico.

Patricia Greenwald, project manager, Macro Consultants, spoke of a luxury property being developed by Bella Isla Resort, LLC, a Puerto Rico-based entity where Macro Consultants will provide PM services. The destination resort is surrounded by water on three sides and affords every guest suite an ocean view; it will include a casino, spa, wedding chapel, live performance theater, a series of swimming pools, onsite boutique shopping and dining options.

Francesca Bucci, AIA, principal, BG Studio International, spoke of her firm as cruise ship architects who create "floating hotels" or "cities with no connection to land," and are experts in such highly specialized design & construction challenges as working with very small spaces; anchoring

chandeliers so they won't swing causing passengers motion sickness; and using only IMO (International Maritime Organization) certified materials.

Noting that the "cruise industry is the fastest growing segment of the leisure market," she spoke of "opportunities for architects, sound engineers and light engineers in the field." Further, since "80% of cruisers sample places to return for longer vacations on land," Bucci alerted developers to the wisdom of building branded hotels as cruise destination points.

Chip Ohlsson, vice president of development, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., said that "Starwood has over 1,070 hotels in 100 countries. Starwood looks to be a branding company - today's consumers want the experience of the Westin Heavenly Bed or the Sheraton Link, our new signature lobby lounge, for example. And we will continue to explore cutting edge design."

He noted that New York City became the first city in the world to have all nine Starwood brands this year – including the newest Aloft and Element.

Shown (seated from left) are: Francesca Bucci, BG Studio; Patricia Greenwald, Macro Consultants; and Naomi Mirsky, Denihan Hospitality. Shown (standing from left) are: Ron Kollar, Tishman Hotel & Realty LP; Lois Weiss, New York Post; Chip Ohlsson, Starwood Hotels & Resorts; and Lenore Janis, PWC.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540