



## **PWC holds Developers Forum moderated by Weiss of the New York Post**

February 09, 2015 - Design / Build

On Thursday, January 22th, Professional Women in Construction (PWC) launched its 35th year with a Developers Forum, the latest in an ongoing annual series of seminars moderated by New York Post columnist Lois Weiss. The event was held at The General Society.

Weiss said, "One has to be nimble to succeed in this highly competitive marketplace," and thereupon introduced a quartet of the city's most nimble.

Andrea Kretchmer, managing director, POKO Partners, LLC, specialists in affordable housing and non-profit partnerships, and principal at The Kretchmer Companies LLC, spoke of current POKO projects.

In Stonington, CT, an historic former mill is being converted into loft spaces; in Norwalk a mixed-use development will include 100 apartment units, 12,000 s/f retail space and a 200 car self-park garage; in the Bronx, POKO is completing moderate rehab of its first HUD Section 8 project on Belmont Ave.; in Brooklyn, POKO recently completed an adaptive reuse project that houses a charter school and ground floor retail within 150,000 s/f. The pipeline stays busy as POKO remains "tethered to N.Y.C. and works with several nonprofits."

Susan Fine, principal, OasesRE and developer for Turn-Style, successfully redeveloped Grand Central Terminal into a retail hub for the MTA 20 years ago. Relying on the adage that "traffic is everything," she is currently focusing on Turn-Style which will go underground at Columbus Circle, bringing a new quality of retail to transit retail.

Fine said, "We have secured tenants of a quality consistent with Grand Central, with excellent food options (from vegan to artisanal pizza) and a number of unique New York businesses." OasesRE, she said, focuses on unique projects across asset class, "wherever we can find a bargain and, through creativity, add value."

Laura Rapaport, senior VP, L&L Holding Co. LLC, is the project director for 425 Park Ave., which will be the first full block office development on Park Ave. in almost 50 years. In 2012, Norman Foster was selected in a design competition to create the office tower, which breaks ground in May.

The lobby will have soaring 45 ft. high ceilings; making it one of the tallest office lobbies in the city. Above the lobby, double height office spaces with 14.5 ft. finished ceilings and floor to ceiling glass walls, float over Park Ave. The penthouse will be a column-free glass cube with 360 degree views, which include the entire expanse of Central Park. The LEED Gold building will have a 100-car garage and car lobby private and exclusive to the tenants in the building.

"There's nothing like this anywhere in midtown," said Rapaport. "There is clearly a desire for beautiful, new, glass spaces, with an infrastructure that can support the technology requirements of today's business and now we can offer the best of both worlds in the heart of the city."

Jay Valgora, AIA, AICP, LEED AP, principal, STUDIO V Architecture, spoke of the opportunities

available from the city's waterfront focusing on the East River which he described as "the Central Park of the 21st century, the new center of N.Y.C." He described five mixed-use and residential projects designed by STUDIO V. The projects at Halletts Point, Astoria Cove, Hellgate and West Cove will integrate waterfront parks and new residential communities that incorporate affordable and market rate housing and a new water taxi stop to be extended and funded by the city.

"These projects will create a continuous series of public spaces and sustainable communities to create the future of the East River," said Valgora. "We have an opportunity to tie together the boroughs in one large vision that is central to the future of New York City."

Founded in 1980, PWC is a national, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization committed to advancing professional, entrepreneurial and managerial opportunities for women and other non-traditional populations in construction and related industries.

Shown (from left) are: Jay Valgora, Lois Weiss, Laura Rapaport, Susan Fine, Andrea Kretchmer, and Nancy Czesak, PWC & Tishman, an AECOM Company. Photo credit: Carlos Escobar.

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