



Executive of the Month: Shamah, CEO of Shamah Properties and Shamco Management: Investor confidence and tenant focused

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Back in 1980, Joseph Shamah purchased his first property on East 29th St. in Brooklyn. "Mr. Shamco," as he was affectionately known by tenants, would often visit the buildings on weekdays and weekends attending to tenant issues and building wide projects.

"My father was a caring individual who would do anything he could to maintain and improve the quality of life for his tenants," said Alan Shamah, CEO of Shamah Properties, who leads a second generation at the multifamily investment firm and its in-house management company, Shamco Management.

This year, the company celebrates its 35th anniversary as one of New York City's most respected commercial real estate firms. It currently owns and manages 25 properties comprising over 1,500 rental units primarily in Brooklyn neighborhoods like Flatbush, Crown Heights and Prospect Heights, Manhattan and the New York metropolitan area.

Along with his nephew Eddie Setton, director of acquisitions/managing partner and Carl Zekaria, administrative director/managing partner, Shamah is continuing the tradition Joseph Shamah started and growing the company in ways his father never could have imagined.

Shamah Properties

Heads in New Direction

Today, Shamah has embarked on an initiative to grow the portfolio to include class A multifamily assets in N.Y.C. and N.J., as well as other major cities across the U.S. On the equity front, Shamah Properties is in talks to partner with a number of family offices, institutions and high net worth individuals looking for deals on both rent-stabilized and free-market buildings.

"It's time that we leverage our expertise and experience of our seasoned partners and associates to own and manage assets on a larger scale," said Shamah, who credits managing partner Eddie Setton with negotiating with lending institutions and placing \$200 million in debt proceeds for Shamco managed properties. The company has under asset management in excess of \$500 million and partnership relationships with multiple key suppliers, vendors and service businesses in order to maximize investment returns for the firm's properties.

This spring, Shamah led the firm's push into Manhattan with the \$44 million purchase of an eight-building portfolio in Washington Heights, Manhattan. The eight buildings - located at 522-536 West 147th St., 521-523 West 156th St. and 535-539 West 162nd St. - offer more than 138,000 s/f in total and include 184 rental apartments and are a mix of rent-stabilized and market-rate units.

"We saw the potential of the change in the neighborhood and the long-term upside," said Shamah. "These properties give us a stronger platform in upper Manhattan to grow our portfolio and develop a new market for our private client investors."

This was the firm's second Manhattan purchase. Last fall, Shamah led the company's first foray into the Manhattan market with the \$13.5 million purchase of a large six-story, 48-unit elevator apartment building at 672 Saint Nicholas Ave. in Hamilton Heights. "We plan to expand our portfolio in Manhattan to have a critical mass of apartments," said Shamah, who points out the company has a new satellite office in Manhattan to enhance tenant services to the highest standards."

Shamah, along with Setton and Zekaria, are busy finding attractive multi-family sector value-add properties to invest in and secure privately placed funds and lending institutions to help grow the company's real estate holdings. "We have a long list of satisfied investors and strong relationships with our lenders," said Shamah. "We rely on predictable, natural evolution of asset growth over the long-term."

Today, Shamah said that the company is "very comfortable" with the idea of buying free market apartments with the increase in rents throughout the area and the growth of the firm's expertise in repositioning assets for increased value.

Shamah Properties is currently seeking out brokers and owners who can bring institutional grade assets to the table for discussion. "We have hired additional in house real estate analysts to our acquisitions team in order to process the deal flow," said Shamah, who recently oversaw the consolidation of the company's corporate offices in a facility in Edison, N.J. to be more accessible to properties in N.J. and N.Y.C.

Tenant Focused

Recently, Shamah Properties/Shamco Management instituted several "tenant focused" initiatives that have gotten high marks from tenants, including a "Meet and Greet" program where company representatives along with senior partners meet with the tenants at the property to hear what they have to say.

"At these "Meet and Greets" we learn things we could not know unless we were living at the property so it's great to talk in person one-on-one with the tenants informally," said Shamah. "For our tenants, our goal is to provide "best in class" housing and apartment services."

Under Shamah's leadership, the company has invested in "tenant focused" high tech information systems that expedite tenants repairs and also introduced "live music programs" for tenant entertainment at several of their buildings to create a sense of community and modern lifestyle amenities.

"Our goal is to take care of our tenants' needs as soon as we can, and to the best of our abilities," said Shamah. "We want my father's legacy to continue. Keeping tenants happy is our highest priority. Our tenants are our primary focus."