



Executive of the Month: As managing director of NorthStar Owners Representation's New York office, D'Elia brings a 360° view to every project

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New York, NY NorthStar Owners Representation serves its clients as trusted advisors, managing the multi-phase projects in their real estate portfolios by adding value, building trust and accountability across services and locations. Over the past 18 years, NorthStar's Philadelphia office has excelled on museums, education and corporate projects. Five years ago, the company opened its New York office under the leadership of managing director Al D'Elia, AIA, who focuses his expertise on corporate, retail and hospitality clients and their projects. The New York Real Estate Journal recently sat down with D'Elia to learn more about this venture.

Q: Tell us a little bit about your professional background before joining NorthStar.

A: As an architect, I began my career at Gensler, where I was a vice president from 1979 to 1990, managing large projects for financial institutions, law firms and corporations. I was hired by Mancini Duffy in 1991 to serve as their president and I was proud to help grow that firm to one of the most successful design firms in New York. I also served as an in-house architect at JPMorgan Chase for several years so I clearly understand and respect the concerns of developer/owners.

Over the past 35 plus years I've built many strong relationships with people in every aspect of the industry, including real estate brokers, owners and developers, architects and designers, engineers, contractors and sub-contractors, and building department officials. And through active involvement in the community, I'm proud to have established countless long-term client relationships, many of which have followed me to my current company.

Q: What interested you about making the change from architecture to the owners' representative side?

A: I was approached by long term friend Mike Anastasio of BALA Engineering and Ron Street, a founding partner of NorthStar, who asked if I'd be interested in joining the company to open and manage its New York office. They said to me, "You know everyone in New York, you've managed large complex projects and you have the respect of all the major players in the city—this would be a natural transition for you." Of course, they were right and I'm thrilled that I decided to make the move.

Q: Describe your position as managing director of the New York office.

A: I'm responsible for the financial and operational success of the firm as well as hiring and overseeing top-level staff and also maintaining quality and hands-on project management responsibilities on projects. I'm a multi-tasker and I just love getting actively involved in projects—from strategic planning through design and construction. I'm also licensed as a "special inspector" by the city of NY and that's an important benefit on projects.

Q: How does your professional background bring a unique point of view to your company?

A: I'm a New Yorker, born and bred—and have spent my entire career in the real estate, design and construction industries. I bring an architect's perspective to this company—one that is based on collaborative teamwork, with equal respect for the efforts of all members of the team—designers, engineers, contractors and vendors.

Our staff encompasses a deep bench of highly experienced architects, interior designers, construction management professionals, cost estimators, and financial analysts, who serve as trusted advocates for each client's real estate interests.

My comprehensive experience also helps clients understand the big picture and brings clarity about every aspect of the design and construction process to assist them in making rational, informed decisions that minimize risk while maximizing value.

Paramount Building lobby at 1501 Broadway - Manhattan, NY

Q: What are some of your most notable projects and client relationships at NorthStar?

A: We're working with many of the leading landlords in New York on some very special projects:

- Shorenstein: We are the owners' representative for all tenant space at Shorenstein's 1407 Broadway, a 42-story high-rise in the Times Sq. South district. To date, we've managed over 30 projects in this building including the eight retail tenants on the ground floor. The work included significant capital improvements and upgrades to the building and tenant spaces including new lobby, elevators, common areas and retail storefronts. I've worked with Shorenstein for many years—back to my days at Mancini Duffy.
- KSR Realty: We're managing an out-of-the-ground residential project for KSR in Brooklyn. This six-story building was behind schedule and necessitated a change in team to achieve schedule goals.
- Crown Acquisitions: We just completed project management for the building core and shell and

tenant fit-out of the new, five-level 12,000 s/f restaurant for Chick-fil-A at 144 Fulton St., complete with a rooftop terrace. The team included Chipman Design and their consultants, with JLL as national advisors.

- **Cohen Family Trust:** We're extremely proud of the newly renovated Paramount Building lobby at 1501 Broadway, a landmarked 33-story Art Deco building. The beautifully-redesigned lobby is about to open later this month after a complex gut-renovation. Our team includes the landlord, Paramount Leasehold, a partnership of Levin Properties, the estate of Arthur Cohen; Fifield, Piaker Elman, Architects; MG Engineering; The Eipel Group, structural engineers; and Shawmut Design & Construction.

- **Peconic Partners:** NorthStar has done three projects with this money-management company, the latest being a fast-track 7,000 s/f tenant fit-out at 599 Lexington. We provided a full scope of services including assisting with lease negotiation; selecting the architect, Mancini Duffy; the engineer, AMA Assoc.; the contractor, Vanguard Construction; the real estate firm, Studley; and the FF&E team, The Advance Group & FCI.

Chick-fil-A at 144 Fulton Street - Manhattan, NY

Q: To what do you attribute the growing field of owners' representatives in today's AEC marketplace?

A: Commercial real estate projects are very complex undertakings and many clients do not have the time to handle construction projects while also overseeing their everyday responsibilities; or don't have the in-house expertise to execute a real estate-related design and construction project. NorthStar serves as a strategic partner and trusted advisor responsible for protecting the best interest of those needing our services.

Q. What's your vision for the future?

A: The future is bright for the real estate, design and construction industries, particularly here in New York. As all the new buildings come online at Hudson Yards and tenants relocate from older buildings to that new area, all those older buildings will need to be upgraded. The re-zoning of the East Side will also yield many opportunities as will new developments coming online in Brooklyn. We're well positioned with landlords to help them evaluate existing building stock, and with real estate professionals to help them understand new workplace trends by providing them with valuable tools like our complementary Workplace Support Program to attract tenants to their buildings.

Q: What extracurricular activities do you enjoy?

A: I am an avid sports fan, and have been a season ticket holder to Yankees, Rangers and Jets games for many years. And I enjoy coaching college baseball every summer, something I began when my two sons were young and playing ball through high school and college. They're both successful professionals now, working in the financial sector, but I still enjoy the camaraderie and team spirit that's prevalent in coaching college ball. Beyond that, I enjoy spending time with my wife at my home up in the Hudson River Valley where I enjoy sailing with a drink in my hand and watching the sunset.

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