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SOURCE LUNCH:

MICHAEL NAMER



by Amanda Fung

Turning eco-luxury into (LEED) gold

Michael Namer was one of the first developers in the early 1980s to convert downtown Manhattan warehouse buildings into luxury apartments. Sixteen New York City projects later, the founder and CEO of Alfa Development has ventured into eco-friendly luxury residential development and hospitality.

Mr. Namer's latest residential project is Chelsea Green, a 51-unit condo. Though scheduled for completion next year, it is already almost sold out. Units have gone into contract for an average of \$1,600 per square foot.

The development is Alfa's second property in its Green Collection, which started in 2007 with the construction of Mr. Namer's first LEED-Gold certified project.

The 36-year Greenwich Village resident is in the process of building his first hotel, on Mott and Spring streets, and is a partner in Alison Eighteen, a restaurant in the Flatiron district that opened in January.

Does it cost more to build green luxury residential buildings? Does it take longer to construct?

It doesn't cost more to build a green building because we build luxury housing. All components have to be top-of-line. Your involvement is higher, and the planning takes time. It does not lengthen the time of construction.

Can you charge a premium for apartments in your green building?

No, we have to be competitive in order to be successful. When I say my building has a gold standard in energy efficiency, that resonates with people. Our approach is to build a better building. We use energy-efficient

heating and air systems that are more comfortable and quiet. So people feel serene in the home.

Why did you expand outside of residential into owning a restaurant and building a hotel?

We try to make our condos like a boutique hotel. Inside the buildings

we have a wellness center, a lounge with a flat-screen TV, a coffee bar, free Wi-Fi, a pool table and a fully-fitted gym and spa with sauna, showers and lockers. That is about the well-being of people.

There are very few income-producing projects you can go into. We all like to eat, go to hotels and have a beautiful home in New York City. There was an opportunity. Hotels are doing well right now.

As a longtime resident of Greenwich Village, what do you think about New York University's expansion plans in the neighborhood?

They are like a giant octopus, or maybe a giant squid. We don't want the character to change in Greenwich Village. That is why different regulations, zoning and landmarks maintain that atmosphere and scale. Our office is in the neighborhood. Our motto is history, architecture and sustainability on a human scale. I love being a part of the community. My two boys grew up in Greenwich Village.

NYU is an institution. Institutions have a pass, a get-out-of-jail card, with Landmarks [Preservation Commission] and City Planning because of their weight in terms of the economy and money. They can put up four buildings that will add 100,000 people into the neighborhood and a 45-story building, and I can't because they are institutions with clout. ■

WHERE THEY DINED

LE BERNARDIN
155 W. 51st St.
(212) 554-1515
www.le-bernardin.com

AMBIENCE: High-beam ceilings with twisted aluminum that gives a wall in the main dining room a ripple effect

WHAT THEY ATE:

■ Leaping Waters beef, langoustine and Osetra caviar tartare with black pepper-vodka, crème fraîche, pomme gaufrette

■ Charred octopus "à la plancha"; green olive and black garlic emulsion, sun-dried tomato sauce vierge

■ Shellfish medley, yuzu-scented custard, smoked bonito broth in a ceramic sea-urchin shell

■ Sautéed Dover sole, almond-pistachio-barberry golden basmati, brown-butter tamarind vinaigrette

■ Lychee gelée, rose emulsion, raspberry sherbet

■ Madagascan chocolate ganache, peanut mousse, salted caramel ice cream

■ Tab: \$296.06, including tip

INSIDE TIP Executive chef Eric Ripert designed the kitchens at Mr. Namer's Chelsea Green, the first residential development to feature the eco-friendly chef's kitchens.