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Real Estate

BIG NAMES in the CITY

How some New York buildings got their monikers

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Does your building have a name? How did it get it and what does it mean? Assigning names to New York City apartment buildings began in the late 1800s and was meant to give this radically new way of living a feeling of respectability and permanence. Think Dakota. Think Athorp. Now, names are an integral piece of the marketing plan for new projects. Branding is key.

According to Jenifer Steig of the real estate investment company The Cheshire Group, a “bad name won’t kill a project, but a good name helps a building succeed.”

The Philip House

Here’s how Steig’s company decided on a “good name” for its latest project, a 1927 building at 141 E. 88th St. that they are converting from rental to condo.

Steig says that “the building had great bones, a great location, a great pre-war feel” and the plan was to give it a “contemporary feel while making the best of the old.”

The original name, The Rhinelander, paid homage to Philip Rhinelander, the patriarch of the family that developed huge parcels of the Upper East Side in the early 1900s.

“But, Rhinelander just doesn’t roll off the tongue. We wanted something softer, more inviting, stylish,” she said.

COOP, Cheshire’s marketing agency, presented the developers with some choices: Shortening it to The Lander; going for something homey like The Hearth; something referring to its Carnegie Hill location like Hill House or Hill Court; or something conjuring a sense of style like The Lexington or The Kensington.”



The Philip House aims to retain a historical feel. (CHARLES ECKERT)

In the end, they chose The Philip House, retaining the historical feel but streamlining it for the new century.

One Museum Mile

When the developers of a new building at 109th Street and Fifth Avenue hired real estate brokerage CORE to give their one-year-old building a marketing shot in the arm, one of the first items on the to-do list was a name change, said Tom Postilio, CORE’s managing director.

Originally known by its address, 1280 Fifth, CORE

chose to jump on the fact that the city extended Museum Mile up to 110th Street.

Since the building is set to house the Museum of African American Art (once the museum raises enough funds to move), Postilio and staff picked One Museum Mile.

“This seemed to be the perfect way to identify our building. Traveling south, our building is the first.”

Gotham West

The Gotham Organization’s 1238 unit building on the Far West Side is the larg-

est new development in the city right now, taking up almost an entire city block from 10th to 11th avenues and West 44th to West 45th streets.

According to Melissa Pianko, EVP of Gotham, the naming process for her company is “an integral part of the marketing plan, the result of the work of a collaborative team of designers, marketing agency, and owners.”

Gotham considered names with a Dutch origin and “earthy” names like Courtyard, but in the end they settled on Gotham West.

“After all, we’ve been Gotham since 1931 — even before Batman. It seemed like a perfect choice.”

The Contour

Some buildings are given a name that reflects their look. The LeFrak Organization’s first residential rental project in Queens in almost 40 years, a renovation of a commercial building that was once known as LeFrak Tower, at 97-45 Queens Blvd., is rechristened “The Contour.”

It’s being marketed as the “building with all the curves



The Isis is named after an Egyptian goddess. (DAVID PALER)

you’ve been looking for.”

Douglas MacLaury, SVP of the Mottone Group, says that advertising agencies usually generate names that reflect the “architectural envelope and the type of residences that are being built.”

The Isis

The folks at Alchemy Properties don’t rely on focus groups or marketing agencies to find a name for their projects.

When it’s time to name a building “we have fun in the office. We let everyone, and I

mean everyone, who works for Alchemy get in on the act,” says Kenneth S. Horn, president and founder of the organization.

His new development at 303 E. 77th St. is dubbed The Isis.

“Isis is the Egyptian goddess of hearth and home. It seemed just right, since we want to attract families with our spacious apartments with a classical feel,” he said. “The hued pattern of the building gives it a mosaic quality, another good reason for the name.”