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**PROFILE Exclusive: Designing and Developing In SoHo's Cast Iron District At 150 Wooster With KUB's Roger Bittenbender**



PROFILEnyc had the exclusive opportunity to tour the model unit in the ultra-luxurious 150 Wooster with KUB Capital's Roger Bittenbender and sit-down with him to discuss the detail that went into the highly-designed residence as well as working in historical, yet fast paced SoHo neighborhood of Manhattan. 150 Wooster offers buyers a rare opportunity to snag a newly built home in the neighborhood's landmarked Cast Iron Historic District and is a modern interpretation of the area's historic loft building architecture, with a deconstructed steel cornice and masonry façade. The boutique residential building features 6 massive full floor units, including a duplex penthouse. Upon touring the model home you can tell that there is just simply no detail missed from the historically uniform matched exterior, to the full-floor size to the 18" baseboards and down to the fully-marble kitchen and master-bath. Learn the story behind 150 Wooster below:

PM: Where did the idea for 150 Wooster come from and how did you guys get the project off the ground?

RB: This was really the last piece of land that existed in prime Soho, at least the last large scale site. I own a building and have an office down the street, so I have walked by this site every day for 15 plus years now and always wondered why it was not developed. As soon as it became available, I was actually on my way to catch a flight when I received a call about it. I told my partner and we jumped on it. While I was on the plane, he was in the office negotiating an LOI and we bought it as quickly as we possibly could because we knew it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.



PM: How does 150 Wooster differ from some of the other projects you have developed?

RB: 150 Wooster differs from any other project we've worked on because it has one of the best locations in the city. It is the kind of place where we could build the best possible product and be confident that buyers would come no matter what. It's that special.

PM: So the buyer closes on their unit and moves in. Once they have been living in 150 Wooster for a few months, what are some of the features that are really going to stand out?

RB: I would like to think that it is our attention to detail. We spent a lot of time considering not only how the different design elements and materials would fit together, but how someone would really live in the apartment. The apartment is split between public and

private halves, you can connect with your friends and family in the open space or escape into your own wing. And wherever you are in the apartment, you can enjoy the light and air from the beautiful oversized windows. Not to mention the sense of privacy and exclusivity you get from owning a full floor in a building.



PM: What are some of the design elements that make 150 Wooster truly unique?

RB: Our windows are about 18 inches off the ground, and there is an 18-inch baseboard that runs continuously throughout the entire apartment. That baseboard even runs through the bathrooms in the marble and stone. That was one of the first ideas that Daniel Schillberg, our head of architecture and design, had when designing the apartments, and it was a very important baseline that set the tone for the whole building. It created a purity of design that we wanted to stick to and use as a guideline. The concept was inspired by Donald Judd's home which is on Spring and Mercer. On his bedroom floor, everything is set at 12 inches to meet his baseboard, including his furniture, his bed and everything else. While that is extreme and we wouldn't necessarily do that across the whole apartment, we liked the idea and we were inspired by his conviction. We wanted to portray a similar conviction.

PM: SoHo is not zoned for residential development.. How do you see that changing over the next five years?

RB: The city would probably like to rezone the area, it is just too hard and I don't think anything will change in the next five years. I have spoken to local politicians, community boards and community organizations and know that they would like to change the zoning in SoHo, but I don't believe it is going to happen, simply because there is no easy solution. SoHo still has this zoning because it protects artists by only allowing residential for joint living, work quarters (JLWQ) for artists as of right, but in reality most of the new purchasers in Soho are no longer artists. Furthermore, retail isn't legal as of right either regardless of how many stores you see here. I don't believe community members or local politicians are opposed to retail, but how they would legalize it during a rezoning adds another layer of complication to this on top of the JLWQ issue. No one, politicians or the community board, likes the Special Permit process we went through to legalize our residential and retail, but there is no easy rezoning solution and I don't see the political will to do it today. The city is rightfully focused on creating affordable housing and Soho is Landmarked and has almost no vacant land left so there is no way to create affordable housing by rezoning Soho today. Therefore I think it is unlikely anything will change.

150 Wooster is probably the last ground up residential building that will happen in the SoHo Landmark District of any significance for quite some time.



PM: What will 150 Wooster mean to the neighborhood once it is completed?

RB: That is an interesting question. I hope 150 Wooster is a welcome addition to the block and streetscape for both passerby and locals alike. The Landmark Preservation Commission described this site and block as a smile with gap teeth in it before we built, so our hope is that we have created a building here that fits in and respects the very rich architectural history and integrity of the neighborhood. We also have a wonderful group of neighbors who have lived here since the '60's and '70's who I've gotten to know quite well during this process, and they have had just the most wonderful things to say to us about the building. It is nice as a developer to not be the enemy of the community, and to have built something that the people who live here appreciate and are happy about.

About Roger Bittenbender:

Roger Bittenbender is a Principal and co-founder of KUB. He is responsible for overseeing all functions of the business with an emphasis on transaction sourcing, acquisitions, property development, property and construction management, and design. Prior to co-founding KUB, Roger was Managing Partner of Calliope Associates, a New York real estate firm that owns and operates office and retail property in the heart of SoHo. His work at Calliope and elsewhere has helped to launch Roger's successful career as a real estate entrepreneur in New York City, with a strong focus on boutique residential development projects. Roger has a keen interest in clean, simple design, and wears many hats, acting as designer, GC, and project manager on a variety of projects. Roger has a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Fordham University.

About KUB Capital:

KUB is a real estate investment firm specializing in acquisitions, development and management with an informed perspective on neighborhood trends, lifestyle and design. KUB Capital is focused on creating beautiful environments and building value for our investors, clients and local communities. KUB has developed projects such as 150 Wooster, Wythe Lane (Williamsburg, Brooklyn), 253 Pacific Street (Boerum Hill, Brooklyn), and 134 Spring Street (SoHo).

Tour the model unit from 150 Wooster.

