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## The Naming Process: How City Buildings Get Their Monikers



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 1800's and was meant to give this radically new way of living a feeling of respectability and permanence. Think Dakota. Think Apthorp. 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, conducted focus groups and 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."

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

### **One Museum Mile**

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

Originally known by its address, 1280 Fifth, CORE decided to jump on the fact that the city extended the length of 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 make the move), Postilio and staff decided on One Museum Mile.

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

Postilio is bullish on the name change: "We believe that the name change has increased traffic and deals."

### **Gotham West**

The Gotham Organization's 1238 unit building on the far west side is the largest new development in the city right now, almost an entire city block, 10th to 11th avenues, 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, "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 re-christened "The Contour."

It's being marketed as the "building with all the curves you've been looking for."

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

That's how his company's building Azure, on the Upper East Side, got its name.

"It's a glass structure, higher than the other buildings in the neighborhood, and on a sunny day the silvery building takes on a blue tint. Tower units have a river view, more blue."

### **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. And no, sometimes the choice is not the one I suggest," 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."

Finding just the right name means a lot to Horn: "I founded this company in 1990 during a down market in the industry-my goal was to 'turn clay into gold.'"