



WINDOW





Or, no pane, no gain. Three very different buildings, three very different approaches, one common result: success.

BY BILL MORRIS

BILLY WILDER, DIRECTOR OF *Sunset Boulevard*, once referred to an actor's eyes as "windows" – windows to the soul. Turns out actors and apartment buildings have something in common. Besides admitting light and providing a view, windows also offer a glimpse of the building's soul – its priorities, its budget, its sense of style. In a word, its "vision."

I'M LOOKING THROUGH YOU: Board members (clockwise, from top left) Gilbert, Goldberg, and Caze (left) and Rice.



A ROOF WITH A VIEW:

Goldberg (top, left) and security guard on Trump Village roof. Because of the complex's (right) proximity to the ocean's heavy winds and the high proportion of elderly residents, the 10,000 new windows needed to be both sturdy and easy to operate.

Given all that, replacing windows can be a delicate, costly operation for any co-op or condo board, an operation that's loaded with perils as well as possibilities. Three very different co-ops in three very different parts of the city took three very different approaches to this tricky procedure – and wound up with the same result: satisfaction. How did they do it? Therein lies a tale. Actually, three tales, ready for their close-ups.



Trump Village, Brooklyn: Heavy & Handy

There are three things that set the Trump Village Section 3 co-op apart: its size, its location, and the demographics of its shareholders. Built in 1964 by the Donald's father, Fred Trump, this trio of 23-story towers contains 1,672 co-op apartments. It's located a block and a half from the Atlantic Ocean, where Brighton Beach meets Coney Island and where elevated trains rumble past and salty breezes blow non-stop. About half of its middle-class shareholders are senior citizens. Add those factors together and the Trump Village co-op board was facing a daunting challenge when it set out to replace 10,000 windows and 1,000 balcony doors.

The board's first step in this complex process was to form a committee and send it off to visit other properties that had recently installed windows, trying to find out who was satisfied, who was not, and why. The board also hired Gordon H. Smith Corp., an engineering firm that specializes in building exteriors, to draw up specifications for the job.

"You need a good consultant who can identify your needs," says Barbara Escobar, the property manager at Trump Village for the past 15 years. "We had several issues – noise from the trains, the rain and wind, the salt

air, and the age of our shareholders. He specified a window that met our requirements.”

Six contractors submitted bids, then made presentations to the board. The board decided to go with Ecker Window, from Yonkers, a 62-year-old company now run by the founder’s grandson, Robert Ecker. “It was a combination of Ecker himself and the windows he brought in,” says Escobar. “The company has a good reputation, and once the board saw the sample windows, they decided that’s what they wanted.”

Herbert Goldberg, a 27-year board veteran who now serves as treasurer, likens the windows to a durable car, such as a Cadillac. “We bought what we thought were the most suitable windows for us,” he says. “We decided to spend the money so that the windows would stay with us for a long time. If you spend money, you get quality. And that’s what we got. We had meetings so the shareholders knew they were getting something for their money.” The cost of the job came to \$7 million, which the board covered with three assessments and a dip into the reserve fund.

The window company has tackled other big jobs – at Lefrak City and Knickerbocker Village, to name just two – but Trump Village presented unique challenges. “[Smith] specified very thick glass because of the wind loads, and that means a heavy window,” says Ecker. “But elderly people can’t lift a lot of weight. Once we saw the specs and the proximity to the water, we chose the manufacturer that had the best product for that application, Graham Architectural Products of York, Pennsylvania. Working with Graham we designed a special window using something called an ultra-lift balance that’s easy to lift and lower.”

The balcony doors, which swing open, were equipped with an automatic closer that keeps them from blowing open or banging shut in the wind. But perhaps the most unusual aspect of this unique project was its level of oversight. The Smith firm put a full-time person at the job location. “He inspected every single window every single day,” says Ecker. “In effect, we completed the punch list every single day.” As a result, when each window was finished, it was finished.

“It turned out to be more efficient to have a full-time inspector on the site,” says Escobar, the property manager. “It was a little more costly up front,

MANAGEMENT COMPANY of THE YEAR

By The New York Association of Realty Managers (NYARM)



Serving New York City for over 40 years

Michael J. Wolfe, President
148 W. 37th St., 8th Floor, New York, NY 10018
Tel: 212.877.8500 • Fax: 212.875.0808
www.midboro.com

Spring Special!

Pumps

Blowers

Motors

Controls

Roof Fans

Cooling Towers

20% OFF
replacement of
exhaust fans or
blowers

OR

10% OFF
repairs of any fans,
blowers or cooling
towers

minimum of 2 units at the same time
Orders must be placed by July 1, 2009

Edison
Parker

& Associates Inc.

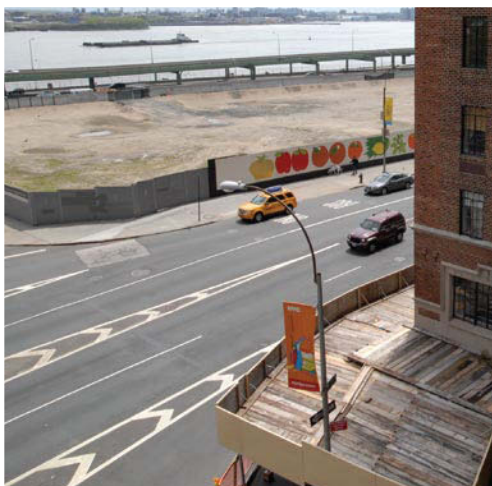
718.768.1600





CHANGE IN THE WIND AT WINDSOR TOWER:

Gilbert (*top*) points to new windows at Tudor City co-op (*middle*). After a developer announced plans to erect six residential towers at a vacant lot in front of the building (*bottom*), the board felt that construction dust and debris could penetrate, which led to the switch.



but it was well worth it in the long run because it was all done at one time and we didn't have to go back."

For the contractor, working with this co-op board was a dream. "The board did a very thorough job of doing their homework," says Ecker. "They visited other jobs, talked to other boards. They were hands-on. The more educated the board is, the better off we are."

Windsor Tower, Manhattan: Landmark

Replacing windows at Windsor Tower, a landmark building in the Tudor City complex near the East River in midtown Manhattan, was an altogether different proposition. The rub here wasn't noisy trains, stiff sea breezes, or an aging populace with stiff joints. The rub here was the oldest rub in the book: history.

This part of town has been known down through the years by numerous colorful monikers, including "Goat Hill" and "Corcoran's Roost." In the early 20th century, the nearby riverfront was dominated by generating plants,

slaughterhouses, breweries, and other unsavory enterprises. As a bonus, the waterfront seethed with thieves.

When the developer Fred F. French opened Tudor City in the late 1920s, this elegant 12-building neo-Gothic oasis was the largest residential development in the city. Significantly, its east-facing walls are virtually windowless brick cliffs. French's architect, H. Douglas Ives, literally turned Tudor City's back on the riverside riffraff. The complex went co-op in the early 1980s and was named a historic district in 1988.

The board of Windsor Tower, a 21-story, 800-unit co-op in the southeastern corner of Tudor City, had no doubt that the building needed new windows. The original steel casement windows had never been replaced, and they tended to leak air, dust, and noise. But that bit of history had, curiously, bred apathy instead of a sense of urgency among shareholders. To make matters more complicated, any window replacement project would have to be shepherded through the Byzantine approval process of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

"For as long as I can remember, people have complained about the windows," says Vivienne Gilbert, an attorney who moved into Windsor Tower 30 years ago and has served as co-op board president for the past 10 years. "But nobody ever did anything because of our landmark status."

That began to change about three years ago, when the long-dreaded demolition of the nearby Con Ed steam plant finally got under way. The demolition created a 9.2-acre mini-Sahara where the billionaire developer Sheldon Solow plans to erect six residential towers and one commercial high-rise along the East River, just south of the United Nations. (That project is now stalled by lawsuits and the soft economy.)

With noise and dust from the demolition filling the air – and with a major construction project scheduled to follow – apathy about their ancient leaky windows finally turned into a sense of urgency among shareholders at Windsor Tower. "We did a building-wide survey to see if people were interested in replacing their windows," Gilbert says. "We called an informational meeting for shareholders, and there was a surprisingly good turnout."

About 200 shareholders expressed an interest in replacing their windows at

You're Not Too Small for Us

We are a professional real estate management firm specializing in small residential properties and offering personalized quality service.

We utilize a full management plan or act as consultants. Call

Carole Ferrara Associates, Inc.

CFA Management

80 East 11th Street New York, NY 10003

212-475-8811 fax 212-995-1647

e-mail: cfamgmt@cfamanagement.com

IF YOUR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT NEEDS FUNDS FOR IMPROVEMENTS ...TALK TO US!

If you're a government-assisted development, we offer:

- Low interest loans, mortgage loans and lines of credit of \$250,000 to \$20 million
- Flexible terms
- No points
- No application fees
- No pre-payment penalties

We also offer attractive terms to traditional co-ops and rental buildings.

To find out more, contact: Gregory J. Fierce, Executive VP, 212-895-4413.

Email: gregoryfierce@amalgamatedbank.com



Amalgamated is a participating bank in the **New York Energy SmartSM** Program. If all or part of your multi-family loan is being used for an energy-saving project, you may be eligible for an interest rate reduction. Con Edison customers are eligible for a 6.5% rate reduction for up to 10 years with a maximum of \$2.5 million for NYSERDA-approved projects. For a certain number of qualified energy improvements, the maximum can be increased to \$5 million. Customers of other participating New York State Utilities are eligible for a 4% interest rate reduction.



**AMALGAMATED
BANK**

Member
FDIC

Please visit one of our locations in
Manhattan, Bronx, Queens

Lyndhurst, NJ, Washington, DC and Pasadena, CA
Main Office: 275 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001



www.amalgamatedbank.com

their own expense. The cost would vary from about \$3,000 to \$5,000 per window, according to an estimate prepared by the co-op's long-time architects, Bertolini Architectural Works. It was time for the board to get busy.

The first step was to come up with a design that would win the blessing of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, so the board instructed its architect to do a feasibility study. Based on samples of steel, aluminum, and fiberglass windows, Bertolini recommended taking aluminum windows manufactured by Skyline Windows before the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Skyline, founded in 1923, is a high-end company that

“ A touch of glass x 3: one co-op opted to assess and use reserves; another got bulk pricing for interested owners; and the third sought a NYSERDA loan. ”

does its own design and installation (and also installs the windows of other manufacturers). “We saw this as a very important project and we pursued it very hard,” says Nelson Baumer, project manager at Skyline. “Windsor Tower is one of many buildings at Tudor City. What tends to happen is that when people see our products, we get more work. Our advertising is word-of-mouth.”

But the Landmarks Preservation Commission's staff rejected Skyline's proposal in the summer of 2007 and asked the company to make some design modifications. It also asked the board to get an alternative fiberglass window frame designed by Panorama Window. It did so, and Panorama came up with a window that's about twice as expensive as Skyline's. In March of 2008, after yet more modifications, both the aluminum and fiberglass frames were approved by the commission.

“Once it was approved, the board had to decide how to present it to the shareholders, how they were going to allow people to pay for it,” says Oswald Bertolini, owner of Bertolini Architectural Works. “They had to sell the project.”

The board informed shareholders that they could get a much better price from the manufacturers if the co-op could promise a large order. About 250 shareholders opted for the Skyline aluminum windows over the Panorama fiberglass windows, and they plunked down a 50 percent deposit for every \$3,000 window before the sign-up deadline of January 31, 2009.

“The level of interest didn't surprise us,” says board president Gilbert. “What did surprise us was that in this economic atmosphere even more people came forward with the money than we'd originally expected.”

One reason for the high level of interest, Bertolini theorizes, is that the board's actions kept expensive windows from becoming unaffordable. “I think the board did a fantastic job because they decided to improve the building



when their cash flow was good,” Bertolini says. “And they negotiated much better prices by guaranteeing that the co-op would buy 500 windows instead of two or three at a time. My guess is that it saved \$1,200 per window.”

The co-op's managing company, Tudor Realty Services, and the building's super, Bert Hernandez, also came in for high praise from the board and the architect. “There were a lot of ‘moving parts’ – attorneys, architects, exhibits from the manufacturers – and Tudor kept it going over a long period of time,” says Gilbert. “Bert knows the building inside-out, and that helped us, the manufacturer and the board,” adds Bertolini. “When it came time to sign the contracts, for instance, there was a discrepancy about the number of windows. Bert was able to come up with an exact count.”

Scaffolding began to rise in late April, and the \$3.5 million job should be completed sometime this fall. (The board also won approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission to install through-wall air conditioners. About 120 shareholders have signed up for that program.)

If she had to do it over again, Gilbert says she would do one thing differently. “I might have made more of an effort to get the other buildings at Tudor City involved,” she says. “But they didn't show any interest, so we decided to go ahead alone.” In retrospect, if they had come on board, it would have increased the number of windows and lowered the cost per unit.

Despite the hoops it made Windsor Tower jump through, the



A CO-OP GROWS IN BROOKLYN: Pulliam (*top, left*) talks with Caze (*middle*) and Rice about 400 East 17th Street (*bottom*) in Ditmas Park neighborhood.

Landmarks Preservation Commission earned some surprisingly kind words. "They're committed, they're knowledgeable, and in general I think they add a lot of value to the city," says Bertolini, who has frequent dealings with the commission.

Gilbert agrees. "I must say I was impressed by how serious, well-informed, and busy the commission was," she says. "They're friendly too. If people do value the look of their city, someone has to decide what to protect and what to allow. You need to have a pain-in-the-neck administration."

400 East 17th Street, Brooklyn: Affordable and Efficient

When the co-op board at a post-World War II building in Brooklyn's Ditmas Park neighborhood got ready to tackle a major window-replacement project in 2007, they weren't thinking about history or pain-in-the-neck government bureaucracies. They were thinking about money.

"Our old windows were not properly installed, and they were hard to open and hard to clean," says Devin Rice, an attorney with New York State who is president of the 84-unit co-op's board. "Some apartments were drafty and cold.

The windows were not holding heat, so it was like throwing money away."

For this solidly middle-class, ethnically diverse co-op, home to a mixture of young couples, families, and retirees, throwing money out the window was not an option. The co-op had a \$200,000 reserve fund, but the board was reluctant to tap into it for the window project.

"Typically, if it's a long-term project, you should finance it and pay it over time so you can keep your cash," says Evette Caze, a municipal bond analyst who serves as the board's treasurer. "You want cash for day-to-day projects and emergencies."

Following some research, the board decided to try to get a low-interest loan from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). It took bids from architects who could perform the necessary energy audit and loan application, and decided to hire Blanco Design, a Queens company that specializes in sustainable design.

"We analyzed the whole building – the boiler, windows, lighting, anything that uses energy," says Socorro Acosta, president of Blanco. "Their windows were a huge energy waster. They also

had leaky valves in the radiators, and the boiler had to be recalibrated. All together the building needed about \$460,000 worth of improvements."

But those leaky windows were clearly the top priority. Once the co-op qualified for a \$300,000 NYSERDA loan with one percent interest, it was given two years to reduce its energy use by 20 percent. If it succeeds, it will receive a reward of \$750 per unit.

With the loan guarantee in hand, the board followed its architect's recommendation and settled on no-frills double-pane thermal windows with aluminum frames manufactured by a Queens company called Crystal Windows.

After taking five bids and interviewing three contractors, the board sent its super and property manager out to job sites to inspect the work of the three finalists. Based on their report and the interviews, the board hired New York Windows & Doors of Long Beach, Long Island, to do the installation. "They weren't the cheapest," says Rice, "but we liked the fact that they were local and they could make multiple deliveries [of materials] so we didn't have to find a lot of storage space. They're a family-owned business. It seemed like a good fit for us."

The installation process went smoothly, thanks to close oversight by the architect, the property manager, and the building's super, Charles Pulliam. Board members agree that this was a key to the project's success.

"Make sure the super is there to troubleshoot and supervise and work with the contractor," Rice advises. "And let shareholders know there's going to be some inconvenience. Scheduling is important too. The contractor let us know which day they were coming in, and they were in and out of each apartment in three to five hours. The upshot now is that people are happy. Overall it was a hectic but good experience." He adds: "Make sure you have a good architect to do the energy audit for NYSERDA. Everything will depend on that study."

Caze, the treasurer, says the new windows work almost too well. "It was so hot in here at the end of the winter that sometimes we had to leave the windows open!" she says with a laugh. That's the good news. The even better news, she adds: "No one has to put plastic over their windows anymore." **H**

Vintage Real Estate Services, Ltd.

vintage adj. superior, best, choice, classic, excellent, rare, select, venerable

**Vintage. It's not only our name.
It's how we manage our properties.
Vintage. Management for the 21st Century.**

Call/e-mail now for a property evaluation. **(212) 736-3680**
Avi@vintageresl.com • 450 Seventh Ave., Ste. 2107, New York, NY 10123

Cesarano & Khan, PC Certified Public Accountants

PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES TO THE
COOPERATIVE AND CONDOMINIUM COMMUNITY

- Reporting on Financial Statements
- Tax Services
- Budgeting and Consulting
- Election Tabulation Services

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT: Carl M. Cesarano, CPA

249-02 Jericho Turnpike, Suite 207 Floral Park, NY 11001-4000
516 437-8200 • 718 478-7400
carl.cesarano@ck-cpas.com