

Living in "The Center of the Universe" after a terrorist attack. A look at what's new in Manhattan apartment buildings, and how the designs of projects still on drawing boards may change. *by Elizabeth Howard*

"The Center of the Universe" is just one of the monikers for New York City, and it has been with envy that many have dreamed about actually living in New York. In the abstract, one imagines an apartment with a magnificent skyline view, or a building on Park Avenue with one of the world's most elegant addresses. Perhaps the apartment is on Fifth Avenue or Central Park West and looks across Olmsted's masterpiece. Or it may be a floor-through loft downtown with access to a number of the city's trendiest restaurants.

With this vision in mind, OCLUS began looking at new apartment buildings and those currently on drawing boards. We found many projects, from luxury buildings to affordable and low-income housing. Our article was being written as terrorists attacked New York on September 11, so against this scenario, we raise a few questions about how living in New York may change.

Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel, Architects is currently working on a 20-story luxury condominium building in Murray Hill at First Avenue and 23rd Street. Named The Luminaria, the building is to be constructed of decorative cast-in-place concrete, featuring floor-to-ceiling windows and walls of high-performance and frosted glass. One distinctive feature is that during the daylight hours sun will stream through the frosted glass windows to bathe the interior in radiant light. At night the building itself will glow from within, filtering the

light of each home through the glass walls. The large, elegant studio and one- and two-bedroom apartments will have expansive views and exposures in several directions.

But now that the United States is at risk of another terrorist attack, will people want to live in a building that is so open and light, a place designed to attract attention against the night sky in a location not far from the United Nations and Grand Central Station, one of the major transportation hubs in Manhattan?

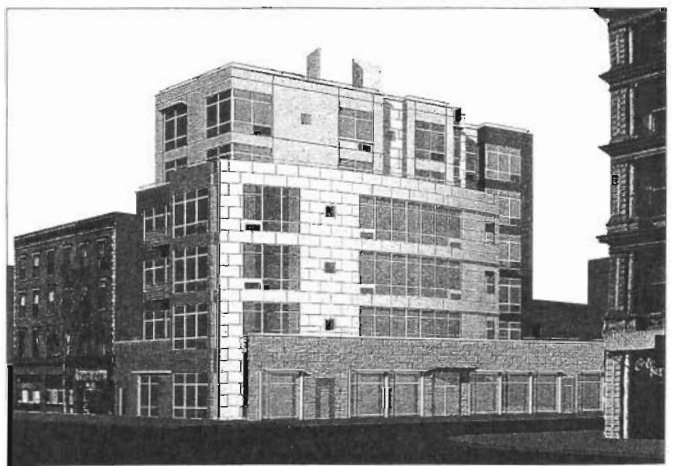
Another luxury building in the Murray Hill/Kips Bay neighborhood was designed by the firm of **Melzter/Mandl Architects**. The 16-story luxury building with 113 rental units is located at 339 East 28th Street. Because it is located on a "through lot" (with another entrance at 340 East 29th Street), the architects were able to create a 5,700-square-foot landscaped entrance. Walking through a garden in a busy urban neighborhood is a peaceful way to begin and end the day and in a period of high stress (and high alert against further



340 East 29th Street,
Melzter/Mandl Architects



West 22nd Street
Melzter/Mandl Architects



Bond Street
Melzter/Mandl Architects



Campiello Collection, Swanke Hayden Connell

challenge the firm faced was to turn a difficult L-shaped site and zoning requirements into an opportunity for a unique design. The lobby was inspired by the Italian and South American architecture of the 1950s and '60s. The floor recalls the sidewalk pattern for the Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro designed by Roberto Burle Marx, and the garden design, with its mossy wall and undulating beds of ferns, echoes the plantings there in pattern and color. In promotional material about the building it is pointed out that the penthouse units have terraces overlooking both the Empire State Building and the World Trade Center. While the skyline will continue to be glorious, it will not be the towers that are striking; it is the resilience of New Yorkers that now defines New York.

trict, is promoted as "equidistant to midtown and the financial district." Nowadays, this may provide a sense of comfort, as the building is not located next to a potential target. The studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments will be placed on top of 83,000 square feet of retail and office space on the first four floors. The building, designed by **Costas Kondylis** to fit into the area, is clad in burnt orange and red brick. It replaces the Coogan Building, which had long been used as a loft space though it was constructed in the 1870s as a racquet club.

Just down the street, at 220 West 26th Street near Fashion Institute of Technology, Kondylis has also designed Chelsea Centro, an 18-story building with 356 apartments with oversized windows, retail space on the first floor and below ground, a residents-only fitness center, and on site garage. Numerous setbacks provide terraces, and there are common landscaped areas on the second floor and on the roof.

Cost Control

Factoring in the diverse population that defines New York, what is the city doing to provide affordable and low-income housing? **Louise Braverman**, a New York architect, has formed a partnership with Project Return Foundation, a nonprofit organization with a long history in low-income housing, and the New York City Department of Housing, Preservation, and Development to build an 18-unit single-room-occupancy housing project. Designed for individuals between the ages of 20 and 30 who are formerly homeless, it is located in the heart of Chelsea on 17th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues.

The project renovates a dilapidated three-part building into a house for people

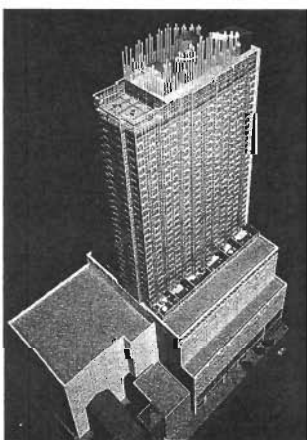
attacks); this is the sort of refuge apartment dwellers may seek.

The same architects also designed two new residential buildings with the character of old industrial lofts. The five-story one, which curves around the corner at Bond Street and Bowery, will have two apartments per floor, 12-foot ceilings, and ground-floor commercial space. Every unit will have two window walls and either a balcony or a roof terrace, formed by some of the \$10 million building's bays and setbacks. For the same developer, Alchemy, Inc., Meltzer/Mandl is creating a \$6.5 million, 13-story building of about the same size (35,000 square feet as opposed to 32,000) at 146 West 22nd Street. This stone-and-glass structure will have one apartment per floor and 10-foot ceilings. Both will be completed next year.

Also on the West Side, at 151 West 17th Street, **Swanke Hayden Connell Architects** is creating two new 12-story buildings that will house 51 luxury condominium apartments. These buildings will be combined with one at 224 West 18th Street, separately designed, to comprise The Campiello Collection. The

SBLM Architects is working on a 33-story tower located on 34th Street just a few steps away from Eighth Avenue and Penn Station. The Penmark Towers will be a residential tower atop a commercial base on one of Manhattan's busiest and noisiest blocks, a neighborhood without the benefit of trees or a local park. The top floor will have an enclosed health club and an outdoor terrace. The apartments will be a mix of studios and one- and two-bedrooms. Residents of Battery Park City may not be interested in moving to a Midtown tower. Yet the proximity to both Penn Station and Grand Central will make this a convenient address for those involved in Midtown commerce.

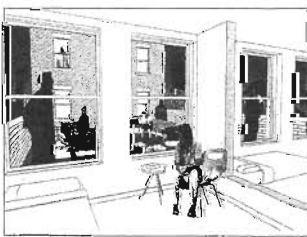
Where's the center? New York is a city divided into neighborhoods. Ideally one wants to live in a place that provides easy access to everything. The Capital, a 39-story rental building at 55 West 26th Street in the flower dis-



Penmark Towers, SBLM



Chelsea Centro, Costas Kondylis



17th Street project, Louise Braverman

who will become a part of the community. To encourage that transition, the indoors and outdoors are designed to merge. The roof and an interior garden will play a role in bringing the outdoors in. The office for the building, on the street level, will be set up like a storefront.

On a 75-acre site in East New York, formerly used as a landfill, **Alexander Gorlin Architects** is designing a new town comprised of 600 subsidized housing units for the Nehemiah Housing Development Group. Like other Nehemiah projects, it is geared to low-income, multi-generational residents of a neglected urban area where resident-occupied home ownership has traditionally been rare. For the first-time homebuyers here the architects are creating a new kind of Nehemiah Home intended to encourage a vibrant community-oriented streetscape. The new housing types and plans not previously offered by the Group include options for both single- and two-family units with open "loft" spaces as well as flexible floor plans which can be modified as the requirements of owners change over the years. Two-family units will provide different purchase options, so that buyers can pool family resources for purchase or rent out a unit for income. All the new Nehemiah East New York town houses employ some modular construction techniques, supplemented by material and finish choices so that each one is somewhat unique. Because of site conditions, all of the new development will be above grade with entrances from residential stoops. Carefully orchestrated facade manipulations and undulating rooflines will recall the best of Manhattan's residential neighborhoods.

It took three years for **Larsen Shein Ginsberg + Magnusson Architects** to develop the Reverend Ruben Diaz Plaza, an affordable housing development in the South Bronx. The six-story, 60,000-square-foot project is a mixed-use building on the corner of Rev. James Polite Avenue and East 163rd Street, with 6,500 square feet of commercial space. The designer, **Magnus Magnusson**, has received a number of awards for affordable housing. This building, in brick, has an "art deco" look that fits in with architecture nearby.

Also in the Bronx, Meltzer/Mandl is completing design on a two-building, \$20 million project for Atlantic Development. One, on Birchall Avenue, will contain 90 apartments; the other, on Sagamore Street, will contain 84 apartments with the same mix of affordable studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments. The nine-story, masonry bearing wall and concrete plank buildings, which will be completed next year, will sit on landscaped grounds along with a parking structure for tenants.

Loft Living

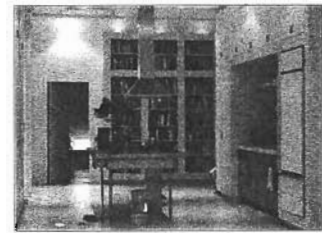
Design Laboratories, a New York architectural and design firm, has just completed a floor-through loft on Union Square. The 3,000-square-foot space was designed for a venture capitalist and his contemporary art collection. The living space is open; a small guest bedroom and master suite are the only defined spaces. The biggest challenge was accommodating the owner's substantial collection on a rotating basis.

On the tenth and eleventh floors of a landmark co-op building on the southern edge of Gramercy Park, **CR Studio Architects** has renovated a duplex apartment to



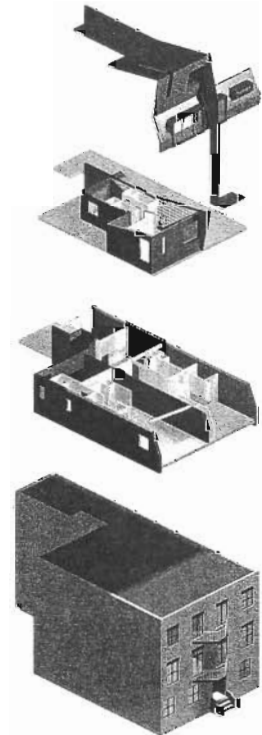
Reverend Ruben Diaz Plaza, Larsen Shein Ginsberg + Magnusson Architects

give it a loft-like feel. The client's grandparents had occupied the space for almost fifty years. The new interior incorporates the original details with the intervention of new materials, custom-designed furniture, and contemporary artwork.



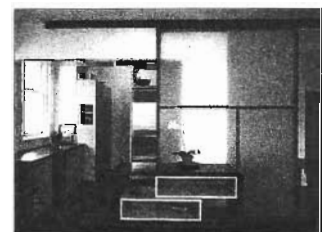
Union Square loft, Design Laboratories

Lynn Gaffney Architect approached the renovation of a three-story residential building as a painting, using the original structure as a canvas and pedestal base for a fourth floor and penthouse. It is intentionally noncontextual, and intended to engage the casual passerby at both pedestrian and vehicular speed. The projected upward slant of the penthouse level on the facade, which relates to the upward movement of the staircase inside, creates an interesting sense of imbalance. Inside, a two-bedroom duplex, a one-bedroom and a studio apartment have straightforward plans but varying sections and framed views of the city beyond.



Three-story residential building, Lynn Gaffney Architect

Gardens, light, views, and spaces that integrate exercise, common areas, and traditional design could be found in all of the projects we reviewed. New Yorkers are urban dwellers, but they cannot survive the pressure and the noise without fresh air, gardens, and gracious light. That is very clear.



Gramercy Park residence, CR Studio