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Off The MRKT

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## Robert Levine on the Penthouse Demands of the Modern Buyer and Building for Resale Value.

By N/A

5,981 Unique Monthly Visitors



From its inception, RAL has nurtured its roots as a design, urban planning, and engineering based organization whose philosophy and knowledge base has been fine tuned into an authentic, educated process for project management through over 44 years of development. Respect for the design and construction process has allowed management and staff to gain an awareness and appreciation for the methods and techniques used to build and sequence complex projects with demanding partners and clients.

### **What does the Penthouse buyer in New York City want most right now?**

Outdoor space has always commanded a premium for Penthouse buyers but is arguably the top request now. The other key feature is a true sense of exclusivity. Privacy matters. We accounted for this with the private elevator access at Quay Tower. We make the physical spaces at Penthouses exceptional. We always add at least one foot to the ceiling height and create a special envelope to enjoy captivating views.

### **How does RAL think about floorplan development with the end user in mind?**

We spend a lot of time ensuring floor plans, materials and finishes are timeless. By not responding to a trend, our residences have forever appeal. This makes a huge difference in our sales efforts and is appreciated by buyers for resale value. Because you can't anticipate the market, you need to ensure the units remain as innovative and attractive as when construction wraps.

In the development of the floorplan, we are always looking at the lifestyle of the individual, knowing that they will pay a premium for the lifestyle we provide. Number one is looking at closet space and storage space, if possible. Then we look at room sizes and the ability to privately dine and entertain. In Penthouses we tend to create a separated kitchen with in-kitchen dining as well as a formal dining room. The appliance selection has entertainment in mind, such

as individual freezers, refrigerators and, of course, wine fridges. Penthouses have more elaborate bathrooms and lighting selections. We want the end user to feel like every need is accounted for in the floorplan.



**Are combination units typically offered by the developer and what are the pros to delivering move-in ready combinations?**

One of the things we do, which is very different from other developers, is that we design the building from the onset to ensure combinations will work without major modifications. David Wine, our partner at Oliver's Realty Group, has always been laser focused on this. For example, at Quay Tower the AE and AB lines have combination plans which were completed from the onset to give us the option to offer a larger residence just by opening up one wall. We make it easy so there is no need to move mechanicals. It's all predetermined and steers our sales process. We've been able to capture demand for larger units with this method.

**RAL was founded as an architectural firm, how does this influence your approach to development?**

Well we are one of the few developers who design floor plans in-house. The fact that we are architects means that we begin all projects with a configuration of the floor plans and conceptual plans. We always determine the yield in advance. We further develop the units from day one but know the layouts and the end goal from the start. This makes RAL very competitive when bidding for projects because we can approach each scenario as designers, architects and builders. Floor plan configuration in advance applies to amenities too. We create a true lifestyle and would never put a fitness center in a basement for example. Community building and quality programming of all square footage is always top-of-mind.

**What are the tiny details that you feel buyers appreciate most that can actually make or break a deal?**

One aspect is physical and one is financial. On all of our projects we create a budget in the offering plan and we've never had a project that requires the common charges to be increased in the first five years of occupancy or more. This gives the sales team reliability on the monthlies. We value presenting the full picture to buyers from the get go. This is the ultimate detail for savvy buyers.

Little details are also appreciated that mitigate the need to customize or spend further once you are settled in the residences. Early on we started using Nest thermostats and pre-wired all

residences for electric shades and blinds. These are nominal costs upfront but massive selling points.

Vince Cangelosi our Managing Director Design & Development selects incredible finishes with classic appeal in locations that could be overlooked like the wall finishes in common areas and public areas. Selecting the right amenities is also immensely critical and anticipating all age groups and usage is vital. We consider the full experience.



### **Do you foresee Brooklyn surpassing Manhattan condo prices in the future?**

Given the land scarcity of Manhattan, I don't think average Brooklyn condo prices will surpass Manhattan apart from cases that are truly one of a kind. In all three of our Brooklyn projects, the opportunities were once-in-a-lifetime with waterfront and Brooklyn Bridge Park access. With protected views and protected greenspace, condo prices can rival Manhattan and we're proud to have set price records at Quay Tower..

### **What is the perfect recipe for a successful condominium project?**

The perfect recipe comes back to the developer's team. Look for a sponsor's history. View past performance and research the developers reputation. Longevity in the market matters. We have been delivering since the 70s. I live in one of my buildings! Every building is a community, it's really nice to see them appreciated.

### **What is next for RAL Companies?**

We always have a pipeline and we are completing a few projects in New York where we acted in a third party role. In addition to selling out Quay Tower, we are the project manager and developer of Monogram. We are overseeing the completion of the residential units at the Surrey Hotel. And have a few residential projects to complete alongside a financial institution in Williamsburg. We have condos underway in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, the Mandarin Oriental Residences in Grand Cayman and the new Four Seasons in Telluride, Colorado.

### **Robert Levine is the Chairman and CEO of RAL Companies.**

*Quay Tower is an incomparable residential development situated directly on Brooklyn Bridge Park. Celebrated New York City architect, ODA, and acclaimed Santa Monica-based designer, Marmol Radziner, have wrapped California modernist interiors in a striking metallic and glass façade. Vanke and Oliver's Realty Group are partners on the project.*

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