

The New York Times

JULY 1, 2007

REAL ESTATE

Pei Designs a Condo in Midtown

By C. J. HUGHES

THE architect Richard Meier has designed a few. So has Jean Nouvel. Even Philip Johnson managed to add one to the New York skyline, albeit posthumously.

Now I. M. Pei gets to design one too — a luxury Manhattan condominium building.

Mr. Pei, whose architectural credits include the glass pyramid at the Louvre in Paris, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland and the Javits Convention Center and Four Seasons Hotel in Manhattan, is the architect for the Centurion, at 33 West 56th Street.

Mr. Pei has designed the building, a 17-story high-rise, to taper upward from a squared base through a series of gradual curves to a narrow top. He said that the setbacks were required — under the neighborhood's zoning, only the lowest 85 feet of the outside wall can be flush with the property line on the front of the building — but he decided that the structure did not have to resemble a sharply tiered wedding cake.

“The face will have more distinction with a cascade of stone, rather than steps,” he said. “You don't have to be big to be beautiful.”

The Centurion's 48 condo apartments will range in size from one to four bedrooms and 750 to 3,400 square feet. There will be three penthouses. Prices are expected to go from \$1.9 million to \$10 million, said Robbie Antonio, managing director of Antonio Development, the co-developer with Stillman Development International. Both are based in Manhattan.

Construction began in March and occupancy is expected in December 2008. Sales have begun at Stillman's offices, at 505 Park Avenue, at 59th Street; a formal sales office has not yet opened.

The setback rule allows 13 of the units to have terraces. The interiors, designed by SLCE Architects of Manhattan, feature 31 layouts, with teak floors and glass countertops. Five units will have 17-foot ceilings.



The building's exterior will be clad in Burgundy limestone, which has a yellower hue than the grayish Indiana limestone found in many New York buildings. The design calls for a wide lobby with a rear wall that overlooks a private courtyard and a waterfall. There are to be no street-level stores.

The Centurion is Mr. Pei's first residential project in Manhattan in many decades. One of his last was the 1966 Silver Towers complex (also known as University Plaza) of New York University, at Bleecker Street and La Guardia Place.