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ONE JACKSON SQUARE

Kohn Pedersen Fox



THE UNDULATING FACADE OF KPF'S ONE JACKSON SQUARE GRABS WEST VILLAGE VIEWS.
PAUL RIVERA/ARCHPHOTO

The best that most New Yorkers could hope for from the recent luxury condo boom was some exquisite new architecture to look at and improved immediate surroundings: cleaner streets, better services, less crime, and more night life. The success of these shiny new edifices—authored by some of the world's highest-profile architectural talent—has been decidedly mixed.



THE APARTMENTS HAVE A STRIKING AMOUNT OF OPENNESS AND INTIMACY.
PAUL RIVERA/ARCHPHOTO

Too often, the designs have been flawed to begin with, or their detailing poorly executed by corner-cutting developers, or the locations haven't caught up with expectations that they were to be the next big thing in posh living. On the other hand, when done right, they have contributed positively to the urban fabric of the city. Such is the case with One Jackson Square, an 11-story, 35-unit glass vessel at the intersection of Greenwich and 8th avenues, designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) and developed by Hines Interests and RFR Realty.

The site itself, a smallish triangular plot, had been a parking lot since the 1930s. At that time, the row of brownstones that once stood there was demolished to make way for the 8th Avenue subway line. In the 1980s, the Landmarks Preservation Commission passed a proposal for a 15-story postmodernist clunker of brick columns and capitals, but it fizzled out due to lack of financing. In the meantime, the area itself had grown into something of a seedy patch. Jackson Square Park, which sits just across the street, was full of dead trees, litter, and the homeless.

Hines took an interest in the location in the mid-2000s. In order to prep the neighborhood for their new condo, the developer teamed with local business owners and residents and formed the Jackson Square Alliance (JCA). While taking its own steps to spruce things up, such as planting flowers, JCA motivated the Parks Department to usher out the bums and to conduct a renovation that involved repaving the square with bluestone and activating a Victorian-style fountain.



A SCREENING ROOM, DESIGNED LIKE ALL THE BUILDING'S INTERIORS BY KPF.
TRENT TESCH

In terms of the building itself, Hines was committed to floor-to-ceiling expanses of glass. "Glass was almost a requirement from the point of view of fulfilling this sort of luxury unit," explained Trent Tesch, principal-in-charge of the project for KPF. "It was the only way to compete with the Richard Meier buildings or 40 Bond."

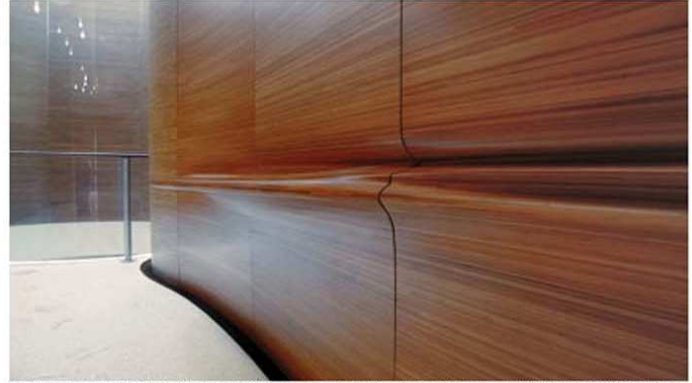
Pulling this off in the Greenwich Village Historic District, however, required a rigorous public review process. KPF met with the community several times, having its design rejected at every turn. The Landmarks Commission, on the other hand, unanimously approved it. "We developed an argument based on the notion that the glass is going to change depending on the time of day," continued Tesch. "It has a different reading in morning, afternoon, and evening."



THE CURVES PROVIDE NOT ONLY GREAT VIEWS BUT UNIQUE BALCONIES.
PAUL RIVERA/ARCHPHOTO

While contextuality may not be the first thing that springs to mind when gazing upon a glass-faced building in Greenwich Village, the project's surroundings were at the forefront of the architects' minds. The stacked, undulating, ribbon-like volumes that form each floor were a softening response to the diagonally intersecting streets at 8th and Greenwich avenues.

This theme was picked up in the lobby, a wavy corridor of sensuously curved wooden panels, CNC-fabricated by Situ Studio. KPF worked hard to make sure that the mullions of the windows—double-glazed, low-iron insulated glass units—do not line up, providing a texture and rhythm that Landmarks saw as complementary to the Village. In this spirit, the back walls of the building are red brick with punched windows.



THE SINUOUS FACADE IS MIMICKED BY THE LOBBY, CUSTOM FABRICATED BY SITU STUDIO.
PAUL RIVERA/ARCHPHOTO

This formal poetry on the exterior would mean little without comfortable living space on the inside. And KPF, which laid out the interiors and designed kitchens and bathrooms, delivered with spaces that feel at once spacious and cozy, and that provide ample daylight and views without sacrificing a sense of privacy. Their success can be read plainly in the sales records. Only five of the 35 units—which range from \$2 million to \$21 million—remain available at the time of this writing. Those that have sold have done so at an average of \$2,080 per square foot. In a city where money talks, that's as glowing a testimonial as could be desired.

Aaron Seward