

Real Estate  
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# A New CHAPTER, BUILDING

LOUISE SUNSHINE PIONEERED THE ART OF MARKETING LUXURY BUILDINGS. NOW SHE'S TRYING HER HAND AS A DEVELOPER.

BY KIMBERLY PEREL



Sitting in the posh sales office at Louise Sunshine's latest endeavor, The Laurel condominiums, I can overhear murmurs emanating from a cluster of impeccably dressed potential buyers huddled nearby. They're whispering loudly about a model apartment they've just seen, and the buzz prompts me out of my sleek brown leather seat to survey a miniature replica of the 31-story limestone tower to be erected at 400 East 67th Street.

A list of the restaurants, schools, children's boutiques, and pet stores that make up the neighborhood around The Laurel is posted behind me, along with a rendering of The Laurel Club, a private two-story entertainment center comprising a screening room, dining room, arcade, game room, multimedia room, and children's craft clubhouse. But the most intriguing element in this sales center (which also serves as a faux-lobby of the building to allow clients to "feel the space") may be the Trophy Club display, a model of the building's sports and fitness center complete with small, ultra-fit action figures working out on a miniature spread of state-of-the-art exercise equipment, and others doing laps in one of two resistance pools (and a 50-foot infinity lap pool).

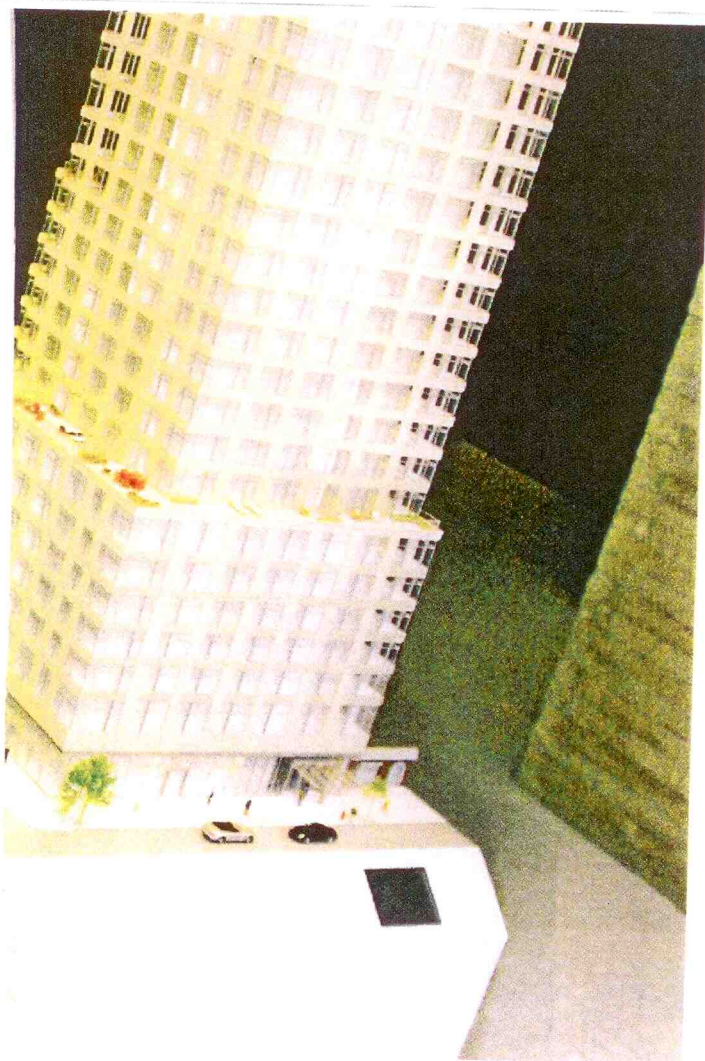
In a residential real estate scene flooded with amenity-rich buildings, real estate marketing pioneer Louise Sunshine is once again upping the ante. As the city's only

residential building with a triathlon training center, The Laurel is positioned as a building for New York-style over-achievers. Developed by Alexico Group, where Sunshine is now ensconced as the development director, and designed by the noted architecture firm Costas Kondylis and Partners, the Laurel, in Sunshine's vision, is a home for life's champions (and their kids)—a species she knows a lot about.

As I am ushered towards a meeting room, I worry that I won't get enough face time with Sunshine, but when she flops down in an oversized Pee Wee's Playhouse-esque striped chair and declares, "No one has this B&B Italia chair. That's called style," I realize we've already been introduced. This sales center is Louise Sunshine.

"Let's talk about my new life, my ever-evolving life," she says, settling into a more serious chair. To better understand that evolution, I ask her about one of the storied chapters of her career, working for Donald Trump. She corrects me. "I started out as a wife and mother. One should not underestimate that as a career," she says. "Being a wife and a mother prepares you for everything else in life because you learn to multitask, you learn to call upon your intuition."

Nearly 30 years ago, armed with what Sunshine describes as her "native intelligence," this mother of three exploded onto the male-dominated real estate scene and essentially



created the practice of marketing luxury buildings. "It was absolutely fabulous," says Sunshine. "I absolutely loved being a talented, intelligent woman in a world of men. Notice I didn't say model-like and sexy. I said intelligent, creative, intuitive, proactive, forthright, and credible."

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The highlights of her legendary career include working as an EVP for Donald Trump for many years, and then going on her own and creating The Sunshine Group, which quickly became the premier real estate company for the sales and marketing of high-end residential buildings. Sunshine was so successful that she was bought out by NRT, the giant residential and commercial real estate brokerage conglomerate, in

2002. Later, NRT merged Sunshine's group into Corcoran, the New York-based real estate powerhouse that is also an arm of NRT, to form a special division known as Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group, which Sunshine left in the summer of 2006.

Ask Sunshine for a clarification on how long she's been in the business, she's quick to reply, "Not long enough!" In fact, her gig with Alexico represents a whole new chapter: the Grand Dame of real estate branding is now herself getting involved with the actual development of properties.

While Sunshine feels she's "still learning," she certainly has been in the biz long enough to know what young families should be looking for when purchasing property in New York City. "The very basics for me would be credibility," she says. "Working with a broker who has a track record not of just buying and selling, but a track record of telling people the truth and taking her buyers to the right product, which means assessing their needs and taking them to buildings that suit those needs."

She also suggests doing a lot of market research. "Really understand the comparable product," she advises, stressing the importance of not only familiarizing oneself with the market but also understanding a building's developer and the quality of the product. "A lot of people purchase things, and they don't really know what they're getting," she says with incredulity. "They just purchase blindly!"

According to Sunshine, young families should ask themselves questions such as: Does the building incorporate green construction? How is the location? Is the condominium close to schools, parks, retail stores, cleaners, supermarkets, and convenience stores? Is this a good investment?

"No matter how rich they are, every young family wants to feel that even though it's their home, they've also put money in the bank. No matter if they live there 5 years, 10 years, or 30 years," she notes.

Sunshine adds that families should also assess the amenities of a building, especially these days. "If you can get wonderful amenities and services, why not?" she asks. "For a family, it's a great thing to be at home and have everything in your building."

When she's finished listing her tips, she leans back in her chair as if to say, "that's that," and her jewelry catches the light. In the world of real estate, Sunshine has long been famous for the fiery sun earrings and necklace set she wears daily, but this is a new

phase of her career, and she informs me that she's recently incorporated a Bulgari heart into her wardrobe every other day.

"Everyone always asks me about my sunshine jewelry, and I say yes I always wear it," says Sunshine, "but now I can say that I have a heart too."

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