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Home



Nick Hovsepian and Robert Postotnik (right) swooned over Edmund Hollander's designs at 11 Hoyt St. (inset).

POWER PLANTS

Call them star-scapers: A new fresh-air lifestyle is boosting the profiles of landscape architects

Brian Zick/IN Post; Benjamin Shulman (inset)

By SHIVANI VORA

IT'S not easy being green, but the stars are finally aligning for one of the design world's most overlooked arms.

While boldface starchitect names like Bjarke Ingels, Norman Foster and Frank Gehry may rule the NYC skyline, landscape architects are suddenly having their day in the sun.

"With the onset of COVID, a fresh-air lifestyle has become a must-have," said Kevin Sneddon, an agent with Compass. "Buildings are doing that by bringing in well-known landscape architects who are creating mini getaways of sorts that make you feel like you're out of the city."

For developers — and even buyers — names like Edmund Hollander, Scott Streeb and Steven Yavarian are now an essential part of the environment.

"You hear it more and more that people are buying apartments not because the units are large or there's a fancy gym," said Compass agent Vickey Barron. "What matters most is the outdoor area."

When Nick Hovsepian, 32, a real estate agent, and his boyfriend, Robert Postotnik, 31, an artist, were looking to buy an apartment last year, staying in downtown Brooklyn wasn't part of their plans. The couple had lived in the area for more than five years but wanted to move to

a neighborhood with more green-space.

"It's a convenient place to live because subways are accessible, and there's lots to do, but it's very dense," said Hovsepian. "Having openness and breathing fresh air was really important to us, especially during the pandemic."

Their perspective changed after peeping 11 Hoyt, a new 620-foot skyscraper in downtown Brooklyn that features an elevated park for residents that measures a staggering 30,000 square feet — roughly two-thirds of an acre. Units there range in price from \$695,000 to \$4.3 million.

Tishman Speyer tapped celebrity landscape architect Edmund

Hollander, founder of Hollander Design, for the project. He is known for landscaping eight-figure homes and institutions such as the Kennedy Center. At 11 Hoyt, he created an oasis filled with oaks and dogwood trees, and flowering plants like milkweeds and goldenrods. There is also an herb garden, lounging areas, fitness deck and playground. Hollander said he was trying to create a "family-friendly magical escape."

"We were sold at the idea of having access to such a gorgeous, yet functional, outdoor space de-

signed by somebody so talented like Edmund," said Hovsepian who purchased a two-bedroom unit overlooking Hollander's landscape (he moved in with Postotnik last November).

Late last year in Manhattan,

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Helen Mei and Kenneth Leong (far right) jumped for joy at Steven Yavonian's Zen designs for Arbor Eighteen (right), a boutique condo in South Slope. "Having the freedom to be outside ... is a luxury," said Leong.



Scape artists

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Hollander completed the restoration of the landmark courtyard at the Belnord — a rare full-block apartment building dating back to 1908 between Broadway and Amsterdam on West 86th Street. The lush 22,000-square-foot space has a marble fountain, boxwood shrubs, azaleas and red maple trees.

"I wanted to bring back the original glamour and elegance and engage all the senses," said Hollander.

Further uptown still, landscape designer Scott Streeb of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates is behind a lush terrace with dogwoods and various grasses at the Vandewater, which opened in 2021 and offers units priced between \$940,000 and \$6 million.

Streeb, who was on the team behind Brooklyn Bridge Park, also led the design of the more than half-acre park at Front & York, opening later this year in DUMBO.

Then there's Steven Yavonian, who has worked on the landscaping at the Cleveland Museum of Art and more recently conceived the gardens and courtyard at Arbor Eighteen in South Slope, which emphasizes wellness through indoor/outdoor living. It boasts a central courtyard, maple trees, an intimate Zen garden and a roof terrace lined with flower beds. Prices there range from \$499,000 to \$1.99 million.

Kenneth Leong, 29, an IT industry employee, and his fiancée Helen Mei, 30, a nurse, said that the greenspaces at Arbor Eighteen were the biggest reason why they moved in.

"Having the freedom to be outside in a beautiful ambiance is a lux-



Edmund Hollander

ury," said Leong. "We stare at the landscape and breathe the air."

Back on the Upper West Side, Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects, developers of the scenic Tribeca section of Hudson River Park, was charged with the landscaping in the 3-acre park at Waterline, which opened in 2019 (the park opened last year). It includes evergreens, conifers, which grow pine cones, and eastern redbud. Asks in the building range from \$2 million to \$17.25 million.

Dalene Bartholomew, a private investigator, and her wife Susan, who works in human resources (both are in their 40s), signed a three-year lease for a two-bedroom unit at Waterline Square after being wowed by Nielsen's lush space complete with green areas, walking paths and water features.

"We moved here from Sacramento where we lived on a nice-sized piece of land," she said. "I never thought we would be able to get that in New York, but here we are looking down at trees and flowers."

Likewise, Komal Joshi, 46, the CFO of a pharmaceutical manufacturer, said that it was the spectacular landscaping at One Manhattan Square that drove her decision to pick up a two-bedroom corner apartment at the 847-

foot skyscraper in Two Bridges. Two-bedrooms in the tower range in price from \$1.8 million to \$2.6 million. West 8, the firm behind Jubilee Gardens in London, created the gardens, relaxation spaces and even an adult tree house with a swing at the building. The areas have a combination of evergreen and seasonal plants — in the spring that means cherry blossoms while during the winter, it's witch-hazel.

"I've been in the city since 1999 and almost forget what grass was like until I moved in here," she said. "I have this incredible balance of nature and modern civilization. I'm from India and having a swing is common in our homes so being in it transports me back to my roots."



Edmund Hollander was charged with restoring the 22,000-square-foot landmarked courtyard (above) at the Belnord on the Upper West Side.



Stefano Giovannini for NY Post



Komal Joshi (right) said that it was the spectacular landscaping by design firm West 8 at One Manhattan Square in Two Bridges (left) that drove her decision to pick up a two-bedroom corner apartment at the 847-foot skyscraper.



Steven Yavonian



Scott Streeb