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Inside 360 Furman: Developer's Vision of Harborside Luxury

by Linda Collins (linda@brooklyneagle.net), published online 06-23-2005



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It will be a conversion, just not a religious one, as the former Jehovah's Witnesses' shipping complex at 360 Furman Street in Brooklyn Heights begins its transformation to residential.

The industrial appearance of the building will be maintained, however, according to developer Robert Levine, president and CEO of R.A.L. Companies & Affiliates, the new owner.

"We like to preserve the character of things," he said on a tour of the massive structure last Thursday, adding "but we will change the color" (from cream back to the original gray). Levine was conducting a tour of the massive 960,000-square-foot, 12-story structure last Thursday, along with his son, Ian Scott Levine, R.A.L.'s COO/CFO, and Tom Murphy, the firm's managing consultant.

"When we saw this building we wanted to do it. We view it as a true asset to the community — in the way it relates to the surrounding neighborhood, the waterfront and the park [Brooklyn Bridge Park] — as well as being financially rewarding to ourselves," Levine said.

The needs of the community and the park were very much in the forefront of the planning process, he said.

That is why they are thinking of naming it "One Brooklyn Bridge Park at 360 Furman." That is also why they included a 500-space attended public parking facility with access from the Atlantic Avenue side (thus keeping traffic off the very residential Joralemon Street on the north side of the building). And that is also why they turned over some property to the park.

"This building has a 50-foot easement in perpetuity along the waterfront," Levine explained. "We bring that to the park."

It also meant adding retail spaces on all four sides of the building — on the Atlantic Avenue side as further encouragement to pedestrians and drivers to use that side; along Furman and Joralemon Street, to add a lot of glass and light and "bring people back to the street"; and on the park/waterfront side to add businesses that would appeal to park-goers, like a restaurant and possibly a bike shop.

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