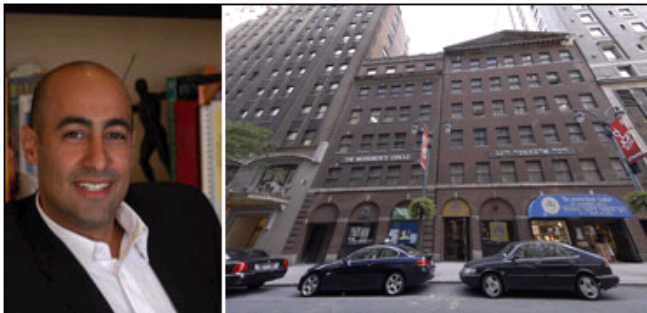


August 31, 2010

Old Forward newspaper building selling for \$20M, to become condo

August 31, 2010 02:00PM

By Adam Pincus



BCN Development's Craig Nassi and 45 East 33rd Street (building photo source: PropertyShark)

The long-time home of the Jewish Forward newspaper and a Jewish social service agency is in contract with developer Craig Nassi's BCN Development, which plans to build 108 condominium units at the site near the Empire State Building.

The developer has inked a deal to buy the six-story Workmen's Circle building, at 45 East 33rd Street, between Park and Madison avenues, Nassi told *The Real Deal*. Several sources put the price at approximately \$20 million. The building would be delivered vacant.

The property was tied up in litigation for nearly a year after a development entity called Empire 33rd LLC, which included the builder of the Toren condominium in Brooklyn, Donald Capoccia, failed to conclude the purchase of the building after signing a contract in March 2007 to buy it for \$34.9 million.

The approximately 42,000-square-foot building, owned by two non-profit organizations the Forward Association and Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, comes with additional development rights to build more than 83,000 square feet, PropertyShark.com shows.

Through his BCN Development, CEO Nassi began with projects in Colorado. But in recent years he turned his attention to Manhattan, where in 2007 he paid \$265 million for 315 Park Avenue South. The office building was purchased at the height of the market, and now the \$219 million loan is on a watchlist along with many Manhattan commercial buildings, but is performing in part because the building is 85 percent leased by lender Credit Suisse until 2017, securitized loan documents show.

The plans for the Workmen's Circle building involve constructing on top of the existing six-story structure to create an 18-story building, the developer said. Nassi paid a hefty nearly 20 percent down payment for the building after signing the contract in May. The closing is scheduled for October with construction set to start early next year, he said.

He expects to charge \$900 per foot to \$1,100 per foot for the apartments, and plans to finish construction in about 18 months. He has not selected a marketing and sales company, but said he anticipates starting the process in about a month.

Nassi said he was one of four bidders for 45 East 33rd Street. "We were fortunate to win," he said.

Empire 33rd the prior developer who sought to buy the building, went into contract in March 2007 to buy the property for \$34.9 million, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court in July 2009 shows.

Capoccia's group also paid \$13 million for neighboring properties and air rights to build its project, where it planned to build a hotel, court papers indicate. In April, a judge ruled against Empire 33rd, and it lost its effort to win back its \$5.3 million deposit.

The Forward moved into a space at 125 Maiden Lane in the Financial District after buying a commercial condominium there in [July 2008](#). The Workmen's Circle still occupies the building, and declined to comment. Capoccia did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Workmen's Circle planned to move to another location, court records show.