

### The Metropolitan Hotel: A New Face on a Modern Design

*“Transforming this tired hotel was a challenge while 755 guests were watching our every move”*

You are probably familiar with the popular TLC show “While You Were Out” which transforms tired homes into new creations, while one of its inhabitants is sent out of town for a few days. The entire process is taped for the viewers to see and the finished product is an overwhelming success. Recently, OMARA completed a home improvement project of such caliber. Although our renovation at the Metropolitan Hotel took a little longer than the TLC projects and was performed while all of its 755 inhabitants stayed home, the result was the same – a brand new look for the former “scourge” of the neighborhood. Today the Metropolitan Hotel is welcomed as the new jewel of Midtown Manhattan located at 51<sup>st</sup> Street & Lexington Avenue.

#### A Piece of History

If you think you have never seen this hotel, think again. The hotel is a historic landmark – the site of Marilyn Monroe’s “skirt-flying scene” from the 1955 film “Seven Year Itch.” When it first opened as the Loews Summit in 1961 it featured the Modernist design of Morris Lapidus, the controversial architect famous for such outlandish Miami Beach hotels as the Eden Roc and Fontainebleau. Lapidus, famous for creating interiors reminiscent of movie sets, was highly criticized for his “too much is never enough” designs. The Summit with its curved green-brick façade and the wild interior was immediately considered an “eyesore” by the New York architectural



*Lapidus would be proud.*



*It's 1961...again!*

establishment. Even today many people continue to detest the Modernist architecture of the 1960’s and currently a debate is taking place whether its buildings should be preserved or destroyed. (The present controversy over Edward Stone’s Cultural Center at Columbus Circle is just one example of this debate).

#### To save or not to save

Over the years, the Hotel, once referred to by Lapidus as “the most hated hotel in New York,” underwent several poor renovations, which only depleted its appearance. With its prime tourist location, the Metropolitan Hotel - minutes away from Rockefeller Center, Madison Avenue shopping, St. Patrick’s Cathedral – cried out for a facelift. The new owners - an investment group including Highgate Holdings, Oxford Capital and Goldman Sachs – decided to give the Metropolitan Hotel a fresh look while restoring its former futuristic design. The owners opted for preservation aiming to return some of the hotel’s “former glory.” The result of OMARA’s latest project confirms that they made the right decision.

#### The new loved addition

Our role in the \$35 million restoration of the Metropolitan Hotel was to work in collaboration with the Owner’s Rep, the John Hardy Group, Tabler Architects, and the Doubletree Management. The project features a

new fully rebuilt lobby, bar and restaurant, private suites, meeting rooms, and a flashy facade.

*“OMARA saw through the schedule with absolute clarity”*

After a false start with their original Construction Manager, ownership switched horses and hired us to put this complex project back on track. The Hotel’s aging facilities needed updating. A glass enclosed elevator, a new Health Club and a flat screen Internet Café were all installed. The most important priority of the renovation was homage to the Lapidus design, to make the hotel again the “talk of the town.”

*Rocky Marzarella, Vice President  
John Hardy Group*

Unlike other major renovation projects, which require shut downs for significant periods of time, OMARA was asked to do our specialty - to carry out the work in an occupied environment. Our key players, Mike Garone, Al Greco, and Willie Hernandez, presented an aggressive schedule along with a phasing strategy necessary to complete this project both safely and efficiently. Our managerial skills shone through especially as crowds began flooding the hotel for the Republican National Convention and the opening session at the United Nations. Under OMARA’s leadership, orchestrating a variety of trade contractors, vendors and designers went as smooth as normal check-in at the hotel. Every morning, Mike and Al met with members of the John Hardy Group (JHG) and the Doubletree



Management to discuss the day’s schedule to avoid any operational conflicts. Mr. Rocky Marzarella, Vice President of JHG, explained, “We selected OMARA because of their professionalism and their ability to see through the schedule with absolute clarity.” Adjusting to daily changes and demands of the Ownership was important in executing the entire reconstruction.

The spunk and eclecticism, reminiscent of the original design, is best represented in the new spacious lobby decked with marble, stainless steel and wood creating a very inviting space for the arriving guests. It includes earth-toned walls, rugs with geometric shapes and elliptical lampshades contrasted with mahogany furniture and teak ceilings contributing to the overall feel of uniqueness and comfort. Additionally, the new bar has already become a chic nightspot to wind down for both New Yorkers and for out-of-town guests. The best way to end this story is to invite you to check out our finished product at 51<sup>st</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue. ■



*OMARA’s managers Mike Garone and Al Greco putting in the final touches.*

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## Current Projects

**Art Deco Condominium**  
252 West 30th Street  
New York, NY 10001

We recently completed a major restoration of entry and façade at this residential building. Using Gypsum Fiber Reinforced Concrete (GFRC) elements, we were able to replicate all the original building features.

**CB Richard Ellis**  
200 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10166

Located in the Met Life Building, this work involved demolition of over 100,000 SF of space. We are to follow this with an upgrade of 12 base building toilets.

**Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**  
131-01 Fowler Avenue  
Flushing, NY 11355

Exterior stone and windows for a new 75,000 SF recreational building. Interior build-out consists of racquetball courts, running track, gymnasium, weight room, toilets, locker rooms, and office space.

**FLA Advisers, LLC**  
350 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10001

High-end build-out of an entire floor for an investment banking firm (\$200/SF.)

**Courtroom Television**  
600 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10016

Recently we replaced flooring, ceilings and lighting in 20,000 SF of occupied areas. All work was done nights and weekends over a 2-month period without a single complaint.

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*Published for clients & friends of the OMARA Organization*

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