

TRANSCRIPTS

Jerome Cohen honored by 23rd Street Association

The 23rd Street Association, a non-profit community organization, honored Jerome M. Cohen, chairman of Williams Real Estate Co. Inc., naming him as the recipient of the group's 33rd Annual Distinguished Citizen Award.

Cohen was recognized for his outstanding service and commitment to the community, in particular for his restoration of 28 & 40 West 23rd Street, the landmark buildings located between Fifth and Sixth Avenues.

The 23rd Street Association also paid tribute to 28 & 40 West 23rd Street, former home of the Stern Brothers Department Store, one of the city's most prominent retail stores of its era.

40 was built in 1878 and 28 was built in 1915. Cohen and his partners purchased the buildings in 1968 and launched a full-scale restoration.

In 1978, Margot Gayle, president of the Friends of Cast Iron Architecture, gave an award to 23rd Street Properties for Cohen's careful restoration of the building's cast-iron façade.

The space became used for

offices and showrooms rather than for manufacturing and shipping. Inspired by the property's success, owners of former department stores along the Avenue of the Americas soon followed Cohen's lead by upgrading their façades and public spaces.

The changes triggered by Jerry Cohen and his partners brought about the rebirth of "Ladies Mile."

Another major tenant, Mare Eckö Enterprises, leased 270,000 s/f.

The world's largest urban apparel brand undertook the elegant restoration of a diversity of original design elements that had been hidden by overladding by tenants prior to the 1968 building purchase.

Additional tenants include the Interpublic Group of Companies, Forbes, Applied Graphics and Mattel.

The building is one of dozens that Cohen has left his indelible mark upon during a stellar 55-year real estate career that began in 1950, when he joined Williams Real Estate Co. Inc.

The firm had been founded in 1926 by his father, Victor Cohen. ■



Pictured l-r: Sharon Ullman, president of the 23rd Street Association, Jerome M. Cohen, Chairman of Williams Real Estate Co. Inc., who was honored with the 2005 23rd Street Association Distinguished Citizen Award; Robert B. Frankel, Chairman, 23rd Street Association and; Arlene Harrison, President of the Gramercy Park Block Association and 23rd Street Association member who helped to organize the luncheon held at Cipriani 23rd Street on 5th Avenue.

33rd Annual Distinguished Citizen Award luncheon

By Maciej Wroblewski

Jerome M. Cohen, Chairman of Williams Real Estate Co. Inc., was honored with the 2005 23rd Street Association Distinguished Citizen Award last week in recognition of his outstanding service and commitment to the 23rd Street community.

The 23rd Street Association's annual Distinguished Citizen Award luncheon, which brings together the who's who of New York City's business and political communities, also paid tribute to 28-40 West 23rd Street, a New York City landmark restored under Cohen's leadership, naming it the recipient of this year's Building of the Year Award.

Cohen, who began his long and distinguished track record in the commercial real estate industry in 1950 when he joined Williams Real Estate, a company founded by his father Victor in 1926, is a general partner in numerous entities owning millions of rentable square footage of commercial real estate in New York City. He oversees a large group of renting agents, asset and construction managers, and acts as a consultant for major real estate owners.

Cohen is also credited with making significant contributions to New York's architectural and design heritage, such as the restoration of 28-40 West 23rd Street, which was built in 1878 as the original home of the Stern Brothers Department Store and currently houses The Home Depot and Ecko.

"I am lucky to have been given the opportunity to make decisions relative to and to oversee the restoration of the buildings' architectural heritage," Cohen said. "The satisfaction that arises from

completing a sensitive and successful restoration can be very rewarding and gratifying."

"We are honored to present Jerry Cohen with our Annual Distinguished Citizen Award," Sharon Ullman, president of the 23rd Street Association, said in her speech at the Nov. 16 event. "Mr. Cohen is a longtime member and supporter of our organization, and he deserves tremendous praise for his leadership in restoring 28-40 West 23rd Street to its original splendor."

Ullman added that in her 11 years of organizing the luncheon she has rarely seen the kind of outpouring of genuine admiration and support for an honoree as has been Cohen.

"Over the past couple of months, I have received numerous letters, notes and phone calls from Jerry's friends and colleagues praising him for his personal integrity and his many important contributions to the real estate industry," she continued.

She also thanked Cohen's team at Williams Real Estate Co. Inc., for their work on the two buildings, especially Senior Managing Director Karen Dome, Director of Operations & Engineering Peter Zientara and Building Manager Wilfred Soto, and Tim Cohen, 23rd Street Association's program director, for helping to organize the event.

The president then took the opportunity to share some good news with friends and members of the 23rd Street Association, announcing that the plan to establish the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership Business Improvement District (BID) received overwhelming support from businesses and community representatives at a public hearing held at the City Council earlier in the day.

Ullman said several months of hard work still lay ahead but the BID should become operational early next year. She thanked George Glatter, Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services, for his hard work on behalf of the project.

"George has worked with us since the very beginning of this process; our community owes him a tremendous debt of gratitude for all that he has done our behalf," she said.

The 33rd annual Distinguished Citizen Award luncheon was held at Cipriani 23rd Street on 5th Avenue and was attended among others by State Senator Tom Duane, Manhattan Borough Commissioner of Parks & Recreation William Castro, and Commanding Officer of the 13th Precinct, Inspector Michael McEnroy.

Chairman of the event, Arlene Harrison, President of the Gramercy Park Block Association and a member of the 23rd Street Association, thanked Cipriani, Scharf Weisberg and the entire Cipriani team for hosting the event.

"We especially want to recognize Arthur Backal, President of Cipriani Hospitality, and Wendy Gordon, Director of Catering at Cipriani 23rd Street and her outstanding staff for their efforts in support of this event," she said.

The 23rd Street Association is a non-profit organization working to maintain and improve the quality of life and secure a wholesome environment for both businesses and residents in the area bounded by the Hudson and East Rivers, from 17th to 28th Streets.

