

Hottest in town! Park Slope gets dose of cool modern architecture with 580 Carroll by Enrique Norten

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580 Carroll St. in Brooklyn, designed by Enrique Norten and developed by Sean Ludwick (DAVIES FOR NEWS)

[Park Slope](#) is to world-class modern architecture as [New York City](#) is to boring. The first two haven't gone together since the 1920s. They do now.

Just 17 units, set back from the street, slightly hidden behind a simple cedar fence and 3,500-square-foot garden, 580 Carroll by Enrique Norten brings a dimension that most neighborhoods beg for: a signature site by a world-class architect.

Those buildings, though, don't always deliver. Sometimes, as in the case of [Richard Meier](#) ♦♦♦s On [Prospect Park](#), apartments sit empty with dark and dreary units in the back of the building with windows looking out onto a concrete courtyard.

In other cases, they transform a neighborhood, as was the case with Meier's three glass towers on the West Side Highway and Jean Nouvel's 40 Mercer St. in SoHo, all of which proved that [Manhattan](#) could embrace modern residential buildings. Stylish home hunters continue to pay top dollar to live there.

It's Park Slope's turn now, which is a good thing for the neighborhood and for [New York](#). It's about time people stop talking about baby carriages and problems with parking. It's about time they start talking about how boroughs, such as [Brooklyn](#) and [Queens](#), are just as important a canvas for modern architecture as [Manhattan](#), [Buenos Aires](#), [Shanghai](#) or [Paris](#).

If this neighborhood wants to be on the map as New York's finest, then it has to look at this structure as crucial to its growth. It has to look past the butchery of Fourth Ave. by developers who put profit in front of quality, and pay attention to its most recently arrived development.

So far, it has. Everyone who walks by 580 Carroll can't help but stare past the cedar fence up into the building's concrete, glass and steel facade. Sitting back from the street, the building makes a peaceful, quiet and strong statement, a simple study of materials in their most natural elements.

"I like the lightness of the building amidst the heavy, more historic structures on the street," says Norten, whose firm, TEN Arquitectos, was tapped to design the [Guggenheim Museum Guadalajara](#) and the Reforma 26 tower in [Mexico City](#). "I want this to bring the spirit of hope, so the neighborhood is not condemned to look into the past, but can see a possibility for its future."

With full-height windows of insulated glass strengthened by a high-performance low-E coating, which allows for light and views while protecting owners from cold, heat and noise, the building is anchored by a reinforced concrete superstructure that squares off the units. The glory of the facade is in its childlike shapes.

A southern exposure on Garfield Place and the western portion of the north side of the building are triangular, angling out from the flat glass. Inside, each of the 17 units has a unique feel. Some are floor-through apartments with views to both streets. Others look onto Carroll St., which fronts the garden below. Almost every apartment has some outdoor space.

Duplexes, one with a private entrance on Garfield Place, are sleek, minimal spaces with high ceilings and their own backyard spaces. An 11-car private parking garage sits under the structure. Thin wires serve as balcony barriers. Some bathrooms are European in style, lacking a shower door. Norten's team also designed the kitchens, which stand along a strip fronting the living and dining space in each home.

"There are people with a modern soul who live or want to live in this neighborhood," says Norten, who designed One York on Canal St. "They now have a place where they can live differently. It will also bring people to this neighborhood that have that same, contemporary vision. Developers like Sean Ludwick, who found this site, they are heroic for building different structures in New York. It would have been so much faster and cheaper to build some brick building, like everyone else. But what does that add to a neighborhood? Nothing."

Ludwick may not think he's a hero. Humble and hopeful, [Ludwick](#) will likely just break even on the building, where units range from \$675,000 for a 910-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath apartment to \$1.4 for a penthouse. When he started the project five years ago, the economy was different, and so was his profit margin.

"This building was not exactly a good business decision, but it will be an important architectural statement and a beautiful place to live," says Ludwick, 37. "Just getting this done, through the construction phase, was an incredible learning experience."

The site is Ludwick's first development since he branched out on his own with [Ashwin Verma](#), forming [BlackHouse Development Co.](#) Born to a [Flatbush](#), Brooklyn, father and a Peruvian mother, Ludwick speaks fluent Spanish — hence his connection to the Mexican-born Norten. He knows the neighborhood, too, having watched his father buy a house there in the early 1990s, when Park Slope's Fourth and Fifth Aves. were not as safe for strolling as they are now.

"Park Slope is a smart neighborhood," says Ludwick, who lost a zoning variance that would have allowed him to build three townhouses fronting Carroll St., paving the way for more profit. "I wanted intelligent design. I just couldn't throw crap up here. At the end of the day, you want to do something good for a good place."

It seems to be paying off. In just two weeks, eight of the building's 17 units have offers and three contracts have already been signed. Marketed by Brown Harris Stevens SELECT, helmed by Shlomi Reuveni, the small boutique property is proving that good design, priced right, will sell. It bucks some current market indicators that supposedly show well-thought-out new construction to be risky and difficult to move.

"As soon as people open the gate and see the building, they know they are somewhere special," says Reuveni, who reports having back-to-back showings and a constant flow of broker and buyer apartments since selling began 10 days ago.

"At the end of the day, these buildings are not museums. They have to sell," says Reuveni. "But this building has everything. The best design in the world, the best neighborhood in New York, parking, great public schools and the garden."

On a recent Sunday, two neighbors of the building who live across the street weren't sure about the all-glass facade. One complained the shades weren't uniform. The other wasn't keen on seeing directly into people's bathrooms.

Norten grimaces when asked about this. His initial design called for wooden louvers that would open and close, protecting privacy or allowing sunlight. The economy scuttled that plan, but the architect is still pleased with the result, and also pleased by how people react to the building.

"I want people to stand in front of the building and have a moment of reflection," he says. "If you walk by and stop for a second and think about life, what's right about the building, what's wrong with it, about if it works for your neighborhood, if people are happy in it, about the changes to the community, well then that building is already contributing to the future of our culture."

What about the developer, who has to worry about profit, and who stayed committed to finishing the building?

"I know when people come to this building they will be emotionally affected," says Ludwick. "It is a strong and well-built. Our lives are so cluttered. This building is not. It is clean, compact and simple. It is less in some ways, but so much more in others."

Go to www.580Carroll.com for information.

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