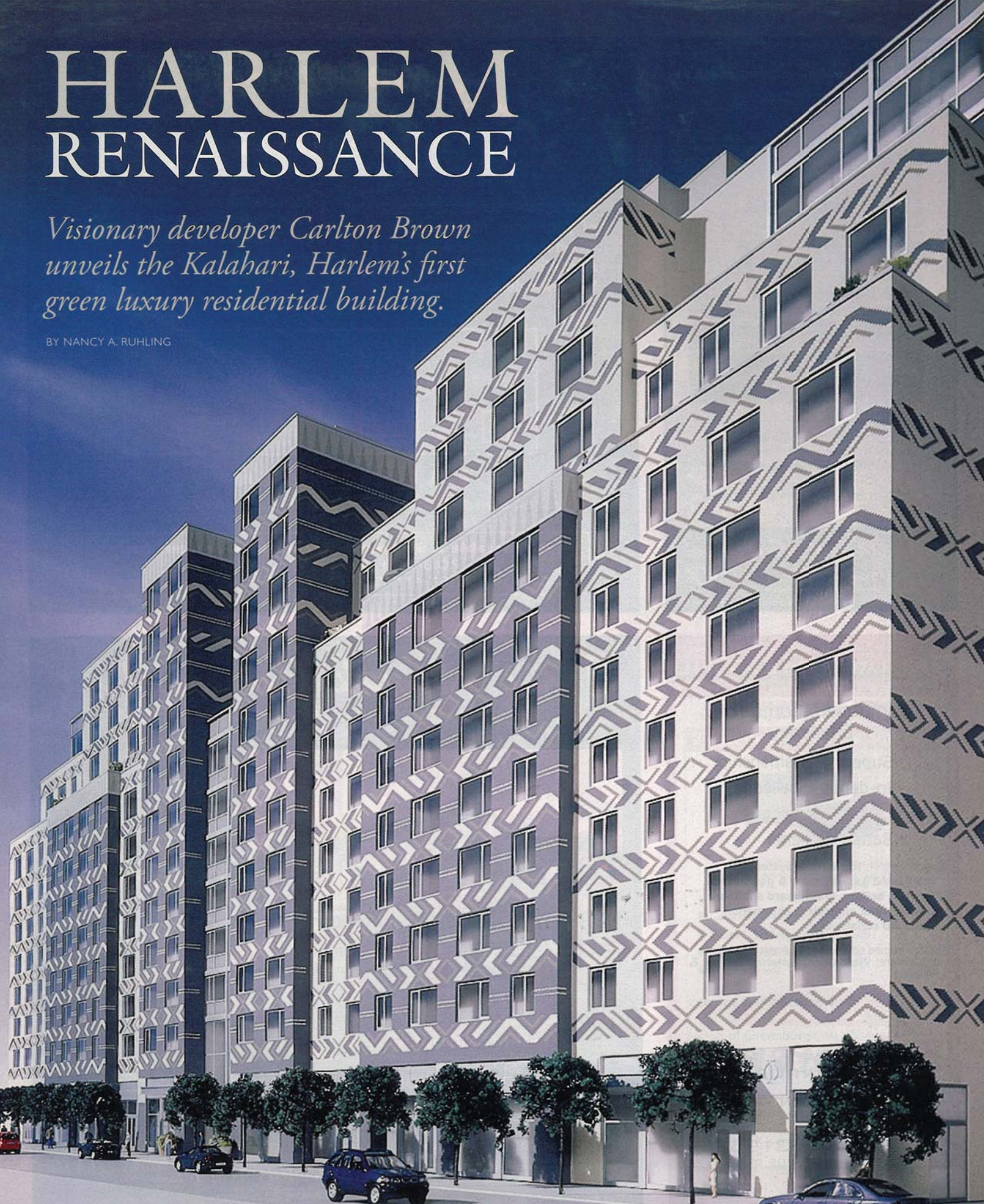


HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Visionary developer Carlton Brown unveils the Kalahari, Harlem's first green luxury residential building.

BY NANCY A. RUHLING



CULTURAL AESTHETICS

RENDERINGS OF THE KALAHARI SHOW THE DYNAMIC FACADE WITH ITS AFRICAN MOTIF. FACING PAGE, THE BUILDING'S CHIC LOBBY AND HIGH-END BATHROOM DESIGN.



“We try to integrate green building with the whole notion of social sustainability and economic sustainability.”

— CARLTON BROWN

It's a crisp winter afternoon, and the sun's rays are illuminating the new face of Harlem. The silver light moves swiftly from the multicolored minarets of the Malcolm Shabbazz Harlem Market, a humble series of mom-and-pop stalls that sell African masks, clothes and cloth, and rests on the shiny steel skeleton of the 12-story, twin-tower Kalahari, which will debut later this year as Harlem's first green luxury residential building.

That the Kalahari and the Harlem Market—the new and the old—form a seamless and timeless cityscape is all part of the developers' grand plan to use green elements to create a sustainable community that is built not so much on a foundation of bricks and mortar and technology as it is on people.

“Human sustainability is more than about shelter, it's about the environment, the culture, and economics,” says Carlton Brown, chief operating officer of Full Spectrum NY, which, along with Goldman Sachs Urban Investment Group, L&M Equity Participants Ltd. and JPMorgan Chase, is building the 249-unit mixed-income Kalahari at 116th Street and Fifth Avenue. “When we talk about green, we try to integrate it with the whole notion of social sustainability and economic sustainability, and we view our role as one of environmental stewardship because residential buildings account for 40 percent of greenhouse gases.”

To make the meaning of this lofty ideal as crystal clear as the filtered air in the Kalahari, Brown greens it down by explaining one stunning statistic. “Our wind-generated energy and rooftop photovoltaic panels will provide 25 percent of the complex's energy, which means we are using 32 percent less energy than the New York State Energy Code,” he explains. “We reduce greenhouse gases by 1,600 tons a year, and each unit saves about \$1,200 in energy costs per year. If you multiply that by 250 units and inflate it two percent a year and assume a four-percent return on investment, then 25 years from now—the target date for when the city is looking to reduce its greenhouse gases by 30 percent—then these families would have earned \$78 million in reduced energy costs.

“This is money that can go in their pockets, can go toward their children's education,

can be spent in local businesses instead of giving it to the local utility company. That's the economic aspect.”

Then Brown puts the economics in perspective: the Kalahari, which hopes to get a Silver or Gold LEED rating, is by no means the greenest leaf on the money tree and that's on purpose. “We're a hybrid building,” he says. “We're green, luxury, and affordable—and in that order of importance. It's an uncommon mix. We have 125 units of affordable housing, and our market-rate units are even considered affordable when compared with other Manhattan markets. We are more affordable than the green buildings of Battery Park City, Chelsea and the Upper West Side. We're trying to demonstrate that you can go green without paying a premium cost and that this isn't a narrow-based concept for the super-rich, but it's for everyone. It's about value, and that is something everyone should understand. One reason a lot of developers don't do green buildings is because they think they cost too much.”

Thus, the greening of the Kalahari, where market-rate units sell for \$700 to \$800 per square foot and the affordable-housing units go for \$250 per square foot, was accomplished by keeping eyes on the bottom line; the green features raised the total cost only about 1 percent. “Harlem has one of the highest rates of asthma in the country—about 25 percent of the children suffer from it—so one of our green and economic priorities was the air filtration system,” Brown says.

Even more costly green innovations, including the wind power, were chosen with economics in mind. “It comes at a premium price,” Brown says, “but it's not a big deal. It's invisible to residents because the complex is, overall, using less energy to begin with. We went with wind power because I'm concerned about CO2 and its long-term effects on the environment and on ordinary people like me.”

The green items, however, don't mean that luxury amenities paid the price. The Kalahari comes fully equipped with high-end kitchens and baths, a 24-hour doorman and concierge, 10MB broadband wiring and services, soundproofed music rehearsal rooms, an exercise center, meeting rooms, and a children's playroom.

There's nothing particularly sexy, like black-water systems or fuel cells, in the Kalahari's approach to green. Instead, the developers have opted for more fundamental strategies that include 60 percent recycled materials, low-VOC products, reduced energy consumption, and improved indoor air quality. The green items—everything from high-end Energy Star appliances and light fixtures, Zipcars, storage space for bicycles (to encourage riding not driving) to rooftop gardens, bamboo flooring, and wastewater and exhaust air heat recovery—are pretty much standard in Manhattan's more expensive green developments. However, at the Kalahari, they are offered at substantially discounted prices.

But what makes the Kalahari stand out, as the gentrification of Harlem is ushering in a half dozen luxury developments in the next two years, is the way it fits into the community. "We positioned the Kalahari so that it reflects the history of African-Americans in Harlem," says Brown, whose mother spent her teenage years in Harlem right before World War II, when she and it were in their prime. "This was the artistic and intellectual capital of the black world, and then it got wiped out. We told the architects to reference the African design aesthetic and to incorporate an intellectual reference to stability." To do this, the developers looked to the Kalahari, the southern Africa arid savanna that for 50,000 years has been home to the San people, who have learned to live in harmony with nature by conserving the resources of their fragile land.

The results are striking: The façade of the masonry towers is defined by a geometric motif that is at once primitive and provocative yet contemporary and urbane.

The Kalahari's art and artistry are more than façade deep: The ground-floor commercial spaces will include an independent theater, My Image Cinema, complete with restaurant, screening rooms, and an editing center, dedicated to the films of those from the African and Latino diasporas and space for the 18,700-square-foot Stephen L. Green StreetSquash Community Center, an after-school youth enrichment program that includes tutoring, squash instruction, college prep, literacy, community service and mentoring.

"The site of the Kalahari used to be a baseball field for the South Harlem Reds," Brown

says. "And there was a lot of controversy when it was announced that we would build here, so we wanted to include a recreational/educational component. As far as the film company is concerned, we knew the community needed and wanted it, so we started it ourselves and found partners to run it."

Brown, whose company also developed 1400 on Fifth, a green, mixed-use, mixed-income development next door to the Kalahari that opened two years ago, says that this latest project proves that green is more than gadget deep. "When people talk about green, they get all wrapped up in the technological discussion, but that's only a piece of the iceberg," he says. "We want people to live together and improve their quality of life. With this project, we grew from green to really sustainable, and the challenge was to preserve the interests of long-term stakeholders and also those of new stakeholders."

With each new project—Full Spectrum NY is working on several, including seven small adjacent buildings in Harlem that house a total of 100 apartments and condos, and projects in Trenton, New Jersey; Jackson, Mississippi; and New Orleans—Brown will raise the bar. "Our directive to our architects and engineers is to design buildings that will use 50 percent less energy than the state energy code and that can be built for 10 percent less than the building indexes for that particular market. We haven't gotten there yet, but we're approaching there."

He's particularly proud of Full Spectrum NY's first green project, 1400 on Fifth, whose green features include a 400-ton geothermal heating and cooling system, the largest in any multi-family residential complex in the country.

The Kalahari, he says as he studies the dollhouse-size model, will be a good guide for other urban communities. Then he points to the quilt-size contemporary artwork that decorates one wall of the Kalahari's sales office. The 3-D piece, by renowned Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui, is made of "found" objects: old bottle caps, flattened and strung together with tiny pieces of copper wire. "We're reaching out to the community, we're reusing and renewing," Brown says. "It's about rebirth." ■



AT THE KALAHARI, THE GREEN ITEMS—EVERYTHING FROM HIGH-END ENERGY STAR APPLIANCES AND LIGHT FIXTURES TO ROOFTOP GARDENS, BAMBOO FLOORING, AND WASTEWATER AND EXHAUST AIR HEAT RECOVERY—ARE OFFERED AT SUBSTANTIALLY DISCOUNTED PRICES, SAYS BROWN. "YOU CAN GO GREEN WITHOUT PAYING A PREMIUM COST. THIS ISN'T A NARROW-BASED CONCEPT FOR THE SUPER-RICH; IT'S FOR EVERYONE."