

The Big Promise of Chicago's OneEleven Building

By Francesca Robin | Published: 8/26/2014

Developer Curt Bailey of Related Midwest said he was going to "bring it" to Chicago and change the way people live in cities. With the debut of his latest re-imagined downtown apartment building, it looks like this guy is on to something.



Photos by Related Midwest **OneEleven View from West**. The 60-story concrete and glass apartment hi-rise is situated where the river meets downtown. It had a tortuous route to completion, full of drama, vanished funding and changing owners. Once the site of the unfinished Waterview Tower and proposed luxury Shangri-la Hotel, Related Midwest purchased the half-built skyscraper in 2011 to reconfigure into a luxury residential rental space. The new dream team included New York-based Handel Architects and interior designer Kara Mann to revamp this recent and beautiful addition to the iconic Chicago skyline. *Fetching*.

We have been waiting to exhale for over a year. Actually, make that *eight years*. And with the kind of fanfare expected from Team Related Midwest, helmed by the irrepressible Curt Bailey, OneEleven launched with an assembly of the beautiful-and-no-longer-bewildered to spill and clink: *We're Open, Chicago*.

Before Related took over, it was a [pit of misery called the Waterview Tower, an impossible Shangri-La](#) on Wacker Drive and the type of project that raised eyebrows, doubts and fears. On paper, the failed Shangri-la Hotel concept had chutzpah, the kind reserved for record books. Planned for the half-acre downtown slot was a 92-story building, a 1,047-foot Super Tower destined to snatch title as the seventh tallest building in the U.S., a challenge that ranks in league with British investor [Bill Davies' proposed 120-story hi-rise on the Old Main Post Office site](#). (That would have been taller than both the Willis Tower *and* World Trade Center. Today, it's a \$3.5 billion pipe dream.)

In 2012, Related brought a hammer and a new vision. "The whole thing is recycled," says Bailey about the 60-story, 506-unit luxe apartment high-rise molded by architect Gary Handel of New York-based [Handel Architects](#), a guy from Queens who heads an [international firm](#) that crafted the design for the [National September 11 Memorial Museum in New York](#), the [Millennium Tower in San Francisco](#) and the [21-story Territoria El Bosque in Chile](#).

"This is one of the great public spaces in the world," Handel told FrontDoor, comparing the juncture of the Chicago River and banked steel, glass and concrete skyline to Paris' *Champs-Élysées*.



Photo by Handel Architects **OneEleven "Before."** Once the site of the unfinished Waterview Tower and proposed luxury Shangri-la Hotel, Related Midwest purchased the half-built skyscraper in 2011 to reconfigure into a luxury residential rental space.

The talented Mr. Handel can afford to spin the dream. After all, he was leading a [rescue mission](#) when he took the festering eyesore that previous Big Idea developers Teng and Associates handed-off to Related as 25 stories of a jutting, unfinished tower whimpering to an abrupt dangling halt. The foundering project hung in mid-thought from December 2007 (they broke ground in 2006) until Related made a deal in 2011 and purchased it through its Related Real Estate Recovery Fund. (Bailey declined to offer how much they paid, but suggested the price was attractive.)

The final mixed-use glass and concrete building is approximately 950,000-square feet with 439 parking spaces (35,000 square feet of retail is planned for the ground level), and since the original hotel specs called for rooms sized between 800-to-1,800-square-feet, Handel [Architects](#) converted these spaces into [luxury](#) quarters, ever mindful of the views. (They

moved the tower to integrate access to Wacker Drive and maintain unobstructed [views](#), says Handel.)

Empress of design, Kara Mann, told FrontDoor she only had two real battles: keeping the lilac-colored sofa in the lobby and working with the size of the building. "It's a much bigger space than [500 Lake Shore Drive](#)," where she funkified, techno-fied, colorized and accentuated city living-style in [models](#) with high-concept personas.

As to the accommodations, you get precisely what it says on the tin: thirty-thousand square feet of indoor-outdoor amenity space; a deck with views romantic enough to bring an avowed life-long bachelor to a bent knee; concierge staff (specially trained at Related's New York location); wide-plank flooring; Snaidero cabinetry (which is becoming a go-to feature); quartz countertops, [white](#) marble mosaic tile backsplashes and floor-to-ceiling windows in rooms with 9- to-10-foot ceilings. By corporate policy and design, expect a non-smoking [building](#) (sorry puffers). The press materials label all these goodies "resort-like," and although the [apartments](#) aren't painfully priced for this neck of the woods (rents start at \$2,195 per month) the spaces are generous (average size about 830-square-feet) with swoon-worthy views.

They delivered.

Contact the [OneEleven leasing office](#) for more information and availability.