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Controversial Tower in Brooklyn Bridge Park Gears Up to Sell Luxury Condos

Quay Tower to go on the market with 125 large luxury condominiums

By Josh Barbanel
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Rendering of Quay Tower at Brooklyn Bridge Park, Pier 6, 50 Bridge Park Drive, at the base of Atlantic Avenue. PHOTO: MOSO STUDIO

It was once the most hated building in Brooklyn, a tower to be built at the narrow southern entrance to Brooklyn Bridge Park overlooking the East River.

There were lawsuits, protests and angry outbursts at long public meetings about the tower known in decade-old planning documents as Pier 6 Upland.

Now the 315-feet high Quay Tower is about to go on the market with 125 large luxury condominiums and the outrage has died down.

“For many people who were hoping it would not be built, they are going to forget that it wasn’t always there, after a while,” said Phyllis Elliott, a broker at the Corcoran Group, who lives next door in a huge converted warehouse known as One Brooklyn Bridge Park, where some views will be blocked by the new buildings.

Ms. Elliott, who said she was neutral in the fight over the new building, said the attention to design details and the high quality of finishes at Quay Tower “will add a new dimension to the neighborhood” and eventually push up condo values in her building too.

Peter Bray, executive director of the Brooklyn Heights Association, a civic group that filed suit against the tower, said that it was possible that at “a point in time in the future” people would “accept it as a fait accompli.”

Meanwhile he said he continues to hear complaints from people who are “shocked and appalled at the scale of these buildings and continue to believe that their existence is not financially justifiable.”

The narrow, 1.3-mile-long Brooklyn Bridge Park, now a destination for both tourists and Brooklyn residents was created by the city and state along derelict piers with an unusual mandate: Cover its maintenance and operations costs through revenue from commercial projects within the park.

The park plan included two apartment buildings at the base of Pier 6 within the boundaries of the park, but Brooklyn Heights neighbors were granted a concession, a formal statement that the buildings would only be built if the money was needed to pay for the park.

As the park became more successful and property values rose, opponents contended that the park was getting far more revenue than it needed and they fought to stop it.

Mayor Bill de Blasio added a wrinkle, by requiring that the project including apartments for people on limited incomes, which meant that some revenue from market-rate apartments would be used to subsidize the affordable housing, rather than the park.

After an earlier lawsuit was blocked, The Brooklyn Heights Association filed suit in 2016, but in February a state judge in Brooklyn allowed construction to go forward.

RAL Companies, which developed One Brooklyn Bridge Park, and Oliver’s Realty Group are now building Quay Tower and a second rental building with market-rate and affordable units.

Buyers next door at Brooklyn Bridge Park, knew about plans for the two buildings from the beginning, said Robert A. Levine, president and chief executive of RAL Companies. He said those units with views at risk were priced lower than other apartments because of the threatened views.

But Mr. Bray said the Brooklyn Heights Association was concerned that future tall developments directly to the south could block light and harbor views from nearby neighborhoods, as well from some windows in the new building. The developers said the impact would be minimal.

At Quay Tower, prices start at just under \$2 million for a low floor two bedroom apartment with limited views. Many larger Manhattan-facing units have private elevator landings, a master bathroom as big as a bedroom, and cost far more. The most expensive penthouse, with a rooftop terrace is listed for \$12.5 million. Just under half the condos are listed for \$4 million or more.

It was built to the latest standards set by luxury Manhattan but at a lower price to make it competitive with outer luxury Brooklyn apartments, said David J. Wine, the managing partner of Oliver’s Realty Group. He said he expected to see buyers from Tribeca and other downtown Manhattan neighborhoods.

The facade by Eran Chen, of ODA New York, has dark and copper-colored panels to give it an industrial look. The rental building has similar panels, but framed in precast concrete to closely echo the concrete of One Brooklyn Bridge Park next door. The lobby has a mix of stone and dark wood panels.

The park location gives the tower its biggest edge. It is about 150 feet from the water, and it has broad water views on three sides, up the East River, across to Manhattan, and looking south across working piers toward Red Hook and New York harbor.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/controversial-tower-in-brooklyn-bridge-park-gears-up-to-sell-luxury-condos-1528291800?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1>