

REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

SEPTEMBER 11, 2013 - HERALD SQUARE PROPERTIES IN THE NEWS - By Sarah Trefethen

Nocera puts his name on the line to bring family values to the real estate business

Even when paired with an open collar, there's something startlingly un-businesslike about the two brightly colored string bracelets adorning Gerald Nocera's right wrist, the handiwork of the youngest of his three daughters.

"That's a mandatory must-wear," the founding partner of Herald Square Properties and former SL Green COO said.

In Nocera's 30-year career in real estate, he says, family values and business values have often been one and the same.

After a brief stint as a retail broker for Coldwell Banker, Nocera went to work with Cohen Brothers in the early 1980s. He was there for 18 months. Several years out of college, it was the first job he held for more than a year.

"Charles [Cohen] showed me how successful family owners handle their business," Nocera said.

"Because they're a family business, the business is 100 percent the buildings that they own. Unlike a hedge fund that will buy a building and have a horizon of a three- to five-year period, the family businesses — like Charles or the Rudins — these are their children, and they treat them as such.

"And the people that they hire to represent them represent more than just their business; they represent their family and their family name."

He left the Cohens when a junior leasing position opened up with S.L. Green, then a relatively new company. Steve Green interviewed him four or five times, Nocera recalls. "Each and every one was exactly the same."

S.L. Green was not a family business, but Nocera found his experience with the Cohens still served him well. "The whole concept of Steve's company was 'we are a family,'" Nocera said. That family went public on the New York Stock Exchange in 1997.

"Steve [Green] is one of my heroes.... He allowed me to go from that junior leasing agent to ultimately COO of a publicly traded company," Nocera said.

Nocera grew up in New Jersey, the state where he and his wife of 22 years, Odalys, and their daughters make their home today. He studied in Pennsylvania and spent time in Los Angeles after college.

He uses the term "A.D.D." a lot when he talks about himself. Never formally diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, he says, he has a lot of the symptoms.



GERALD NOCERA

The future real estate player studied journalism and communications in college, but an internship in an advertising agency failed to hold his attention. He moved to L.A. and worked in sales for both I.B.M. and in an equipment financing agency before he took the position with Coldwell Banker, mainly to get back to New York.

"The first thing I learned in LA was that I'm an east coast guy," he said.

But somewhere in the process of that job and his time at Cohen Brothers, he fell in love with real estate.

"It's one of those industries where you get kind of immediate satisfaction," he said. "In the course of a relatively short period of time, you see the fruits of your labor."

After an impressive run at S.L. Green, Nocera left in 2007 to start Herald Square Properties, along with fellow S.L. Green COO emeritus Michael Reid and John Monaco, who was also a SVP at S.L. Green but whose history with Nocera dates back to the days when Monaco was Nocera's supervisor at Cohen Brothers.

The trio aim to bring their experience with hands-on, value added ownership to the company that they say is "more than an owners' representative."

One notable success is the Lipstick Building on Third Avenue, the former office of the notorious Ponzi scheme criminal, Bernie Madoff.

The owners "knew we had to move this building up a notch after the perceived negatives of the previous owner," Nocera said. "They brought us in for our expertise."

Today, the building is over 90 percent leased.

The partners are looking to grow their holdings to between three and five million square feet, Reid said, but looking into the distant future he sees an upper bound of somewhere between 10 and 15 million s/f, in order to maintain a fully hands-on approach.

"This is now our family," Nocera said. "This is the only way I know how to do business now. It's 110 percent of my focus, of John's focus, of Michael's focus and of [fourth partner] John Schneidman's focus. And our name is on the line."