

100% Growth, No End In Sight

Stephen B. Jacobs Group, P.C.

Stephen Jacobs is a busy man. He oversees a 60-person firm from a rooftop office at 677 Fifth Avenue, looking directly across the street to the spires of St. Thomas' Church. Half of the firm shares his space; the other half is in the building next-door, 681 Fifth, because he literally could no longer fit everyone in the original office. When you experience 100% growth in 12 months, life becomes a tremendous juggling act, even with strong management supporting you.

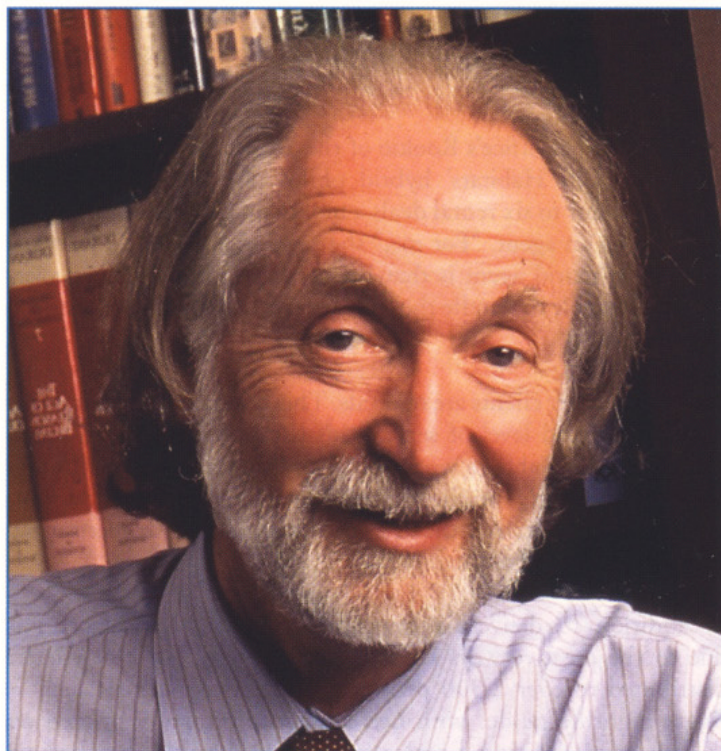
Jacobs will celebrate the 40th anniversary of his firm, The Stephen B. Jacobs Group, next year. Needless to say, he has seen and lived through many real estate cycles since 1967; his career and firm have followed those tides. But he's never gone through the kind of explosive growth that he's seeing now, and even with the press and pundits predicting the end of the proverbial "bubble", there is just no end in sight.

For most of his career, Jacobs has worked in New York City. He's created a distinguished body of work in a wide variety of architectural disciplines, from adaptive re-use and historical preservation to high-rise residential and hotel development. For many years Jacobs specialized in preservation, primarily in Manhattan, although he also designed the renovation of the bridges in Prospect Park, the renovation and rooftop addition to what is now the Peninsula Hotel on Fifth Avenue, high rises on the Upper East Side, and both affordable and market-rate housing in Brooklyn.

In the past decade Jacobs, along with Andi Pepper, his frequent collaborator, affiliate interior designer, and wife, have become one of the most sought-after teams in the hospitality industry. Their super-hip designs for client Henry Kallen at The Library and Giraffe Hotels, followed by the stunning success of the Gansevoort in the Meatpacking District for William and Michael Achenbaum, has led to tremendous recognition in the national press as well as to more commissions throughout North America.

Now they're working on additional Gansevoort Hotels in other cities, notably Miami and Los Angeles. They are designing a new prototype room for Caesar's and just finished new guestrooms for the Mansfield on West 44th Street. As Jacobs finds himself in conversations with developers in Raleigh, North Carolina; Jersey City, New Jersey; Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and Montreal, Canada, it becomes clear that the firm has a national profile.

In the meantime the office is working on at least a dozen new buildings. The most notable recently-completed or in-process projects include 555 West 23rd Street, a 360-unit condominium building for Douglaston Development; a 650-unit residential building on West 38th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues for Glenwood Management; Donald Zucker's site at Thompson & Broome Streets in SoHo; and 325 Fifth Avenue, a sleek, sophisticated glass tower opening this fall across the street from the Empire State Building. It is almost



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immediately a new landmark.

The largest project in the office right now is the design of The Edge in Williamsburg, approximately 1 million sq ft of multi-use development on the East River at North 5th Street and Kent Avenue. Douglaston Development is developing this new community. Jeff Levine, principal of Douglaston Development, is overseeing the design of market rate and affordable housing, retail, extensive public gardens, piers, and a marina.

As a founder and president of the firm, Jacobs sets the benchmark for the quality of design for which they are noted. He takes a hands-on role in all of the firm's commissions, establishing design direction and personally guiding the staff through the design process. Given the intensity of his work, it's no wonder that Jacobs and Pepper retreat to Vermont on the weekends, where he finds peace and clarity that balances the pace of the city. ■

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