

OCTOBER 2018

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THE DESIGN HIGH

HIGHLYANN KRASNOW AND TEAM MEMBERS
LAURA NAYAR, BROOKE KATZ, AND JENNIFER HUSCH
TAKE ON INTERIOR DESIGN.



Photography by Jill Lorenberg

High on Interior Design

The Design High Tells a Story With Every Project

By: Debra Hazel

From creating a speakeasy in a former bank-turned-luxury-apartment building to staging a new development project, interior design can make or break a building. That's why Highlyann Krasnow took the unique step of launching The Design High, an in-house interior design firm specializing in new development projects.

In less than five years, however, the firm's success has spread to commercial buildings, renovations, and even private clients, with its work highlighted in major national real estate and design media, says Highlyann Krasnow, partner and principal of The Design High.

"We've definitely grown pretty quickly. We've worked with various clients including brokerage companies, developers, and private clients. We've done everything from 800-unit rental projects, a large gym, a large office space, small apartments—even our own offices," Krasnow says.

The firm provides services including design and development, architectural and construction consulting, staging, brand direction, and furniture, fixtures, and equipment specifications.

Krasnow came to interior design via real estate brokerage. A founder of The Developers Group, she merged the firm with the Real Estate Group of New York

to form MNS Realty in 2009. Based on her experience of marketing, renting, and selling more than 200 residential developments (and growing up with an interior designer mother), she honed an eye for creating contemporary, cost-effective, and sustainable designs for clients.

"I started as a broker so I have always been involved in the new development design process. Developers just kept asking me to be more involved. If developers didn't have a designer in mind, we could handle that for them and get exactly what we wanted in order to help sell the project," Krasnow explains. "It's something I've always liked to do. I'd helped with the outsourced interior

designers, and over time they kept asking me to do more on the design side. It made sense to create an interior design firm in 2014.”

Krasnow and interior designers Jennifer Husch, Brooke Hertsic, and Laura Nayar offer design and development services from predevelopment through installation, including space planning, schematic design, renderings, finish and fixture selection, furniture selection, and custom millwork and furniture design. They consult with architectural firms on construction drawings and project phasing. Services are available to developers, individuals, and other brokerage firms. The result has been rapid growth for a four-year-old firm.

As part of its services, The Design High stages nearly all of its projects, varying the style as the buildings and neighborhoods warrant. The result: projects that rent or sell at higher prices per square foot and at a faster rate than competitors.

“Doing models is always a lot of fun,” Krasnow notes. “We get materials from everywhere: Burke Décor, ABC Carpet, even décor items from Target.”

The key for all of The Design High’s projects is branding. The firm believes that design and branding work together by telling a cohesive story for each project, integrating elements such as logos, color schemes, furniture, color, and finishes.

“With the interior design, branding, and brokerage working together, we can match how the brokers are marketing the building,” Krasnow observes. “This creates the most complementary project so that a potential buyer who goes online will sense that story.”

At 63-67 Wall Street, a former bank with historic architecture was reinvented into a contemporary luxury building. The Design High turned a double-height great room into a 10,000-square-foot amenity space incorporating a lounge, business center, library, game room, and resident-only speakeasy dominated by a custom-made bar. Custom banquettes complemented the wood paneling preserved from the original building. Victorian wallpaper added to the classic décor. Design High designed and executed a new entrance lobby, using bursts of color via custom-designed furnishings to a neutral classic interior, and creat-

to a rental.

“People loved the end product, and spent 20 percent more on the rents,” she adds.

Sustainability is important both on the projects and in the office. Since many projects are renovations, The Design High makes a conscious effort to reuse what they can and specify sustainable new materials. They also are conscious of energy consumption. For example, they specify energy-efficient LED lighting. In the office, the firm limits the use of paper and reuses items as it can. It also donates monthly and annually to environmental protection funds.

“There is no plastic in our office, and as we spec projects, we find items that are sustainably sourced,” Krasnow continues. “We then give that information to the developer, and they decide what to do. We’re not contractors, we’re interior designers, so we’re not doing the purchasing. But we definitely try to push sustainability.”

With commercial and residential construction continuing, and retrofits, The Design High continues to grow, even though the firm has done minimal marketing. New clients have come through referrals and word-of-mouth. Krasnow’s staff is growing accordingly, with a fourth interior designer coming on board in September, and perhaps an architect in the not-too-distant future. For now, however, the firm will remain focused on New York City, where its consumer knowledge is strongest—and where they’re having the most fun, even in the busiest of times.

“It’s stressful as we handle every aspect of a development,” Krasnow concludes. “But it’s exciting.”

“We don’t waste time overdesigning, we understand the process, we know what works.”

ed multiple seating areas. The company also renovated the corridors and interior units combining modern amenities and appliances with woods that tie the units back to the luxurious common floors.

“Every project has its own design elements based on who we’re trying to target. Because I was a broker first, we know strategically what clients are looking for,” Krasnow says. “We design according to the developer’s budget. We don’t waste time overdesigning, we understand the process, we know what works.”

PCVST had been struggling with increasing its rentals, despite the presence of high-end kitchen appliances from Sub-Zero and Wolf. But the kitchens themselves were small and dark. The Design High, instead, redesigned the kitchens by knocking out the wall for a more open floor plan, and replacing the luxury appliances with GE more suited