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Anchor breaks ground at award-winning project



Winick Realty Group announced that Whole Foods, the anchor tenant at Columbus Village, took possession last month and started the construction. Whole Foods

will occupy 57,000 s/f at this major project encompassing three city blocks between West 97th and West 100th Streets along Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues.

Other tenants in the project will include Michels Arts and Crafts, Modell's Sporting Goods, Borders, Associated Supermarket, Crumbs, Duane Reade, Chase, Bank of America, Ryan Medical Center, Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan and Mandell School.

Columbus Village recently earned Jeffrey Winick a Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) award. The organization declared Winick's work on a series of leases for the 400,000 s/f retail component of the five-building project the 2007 retail deal that Most Significantly Benefits Manhattan. Now the Columbus Avenue project, located between West 97th and West 100th streets, will provide the under-served neighborhood with a variety of national, regional and local retailers that appeal to the area's diverse demographics and income levels. And once said and done, Columbus Village is expected to stimulate the economy with 1,000 new jobs.

CEO Jeff Winick partnered with Winick Realty's director of luxury and brand retail Lori Shabtai on the project, which required the brokers to become an integral part of the planning process with both the developer and architects. Creating the retail vision of Columbus Village was the first task charged to the team. This required a tremendous amount of patience and flexibility and once that vision was realized, Winick and Shabtai had to communicate the intangibles, to sell retailers on the neighborhoods potential.

In February 2007, Winick notched its first lease at Columbus Village, through the 57,000 s/f deal that landed the upscale grocer as the project's anchor tenant. It also marked the grocer's first store north of 59th Street. The Winick team also attracted

Borders to its first location above 59th Street, when it signed on for more than 26,000 s/f last February.

But zoning, which prohibited retail above the ground floor, also presented Winick with challenges. Project approvals required the developer to designate second floor space for community uses; thus, Winick secured leases for two private schools and medical facilities to fill the 65,000 s/f community space. Fortunately, the lack of second-floor space did little to scare off retailers.

Their solution was a three-level layout that included two below ground-level floors – a configuration that isn't always the most desirable to retail tenants. National brands bought into this unique layout that relied on modest ground level square footage for exposure and concentrating the bulk of operation below ground.

In fact, after mulling its Manhattan entrance for years – and to no avail – Winick is credited with landing the city's first Michael's arts and crafts store in a lease that granted the well-known retailer 1,200 s/f on the ground floor and 22,700 s/f on the lower level of Columbus Village. And the leases didn't stop there.

Over the last year, Winick inked Columbus Village deals for Duane Reade, Bank of America, Modell's, Chase Bank, Whole Foods Liquor, Ryan Center and Associated. Like Borders and Michaels, Modell's took a chance on minimal ground-floor space, signing for 1,115 s/f at that level, while relying heavily on below ground space, where it will occupy an additional 23,200 s/f.

According to Winick, just 50,000 s/f of retail availability remains for Columbus Village. He expects to attract clothing, shoe, hardware and home furnishing retailers, along with some regional or local enterprises within the upcoming weeks. ■