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BIG DEAL

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GARY H. SILVER and his partners designed Observatory Place, a new condominium on First Avenue and East 104th Street in East [Harlem](#), themselves. They bought the land, put together the financing. They picked the amenities and the mix of apartment sizes, and ordered up a Web site. They supervised construction of the 38 units.

And now, they are even selling the condos themselves.

Though many homeowners across the country sell their own apartments without the services of a broker, a do-it-yourself approach by such a large [Manhattan](#) development is rare. But on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, Mr. Silver, an architect, and Albert Marengo, the business manager and a principal in Mr. Silver's architecture firm, can be found riding up and down the construction elevator with would-be buyers in hard hats.

They show off the balconies and terraces, some with views of the Triborough Bridge, and talk about the doorman, the rooftop gym and hardwood floors. They have a small office with tile and counter samples, and large layouts of each unit. They sent postcards to renters in the neighborhood and called back people inquiring about the building.

The development, in cast stone with a setback in red brick, faces a large housing project, but prices are lower than elsewhere in Manhattan, averaging about \$670 a square foot, ranging from \$311,400 for a studio to \$1.18 million for a three-bedroom penthouse with a terrace.

"We were never really thrilled with the marketing and presentation that brokers showed us," Mr. Marengo said.

He said that by talking directly to buyers, he and Mr. Silver, an experienced architect who is relatively new at the development business, are learning about what buyers want. They decided to add closets to some units, install water spigots on terraces for gardening, and raise some ceilings between beams, in response to suggestions from buyers.

Not all brokers agreed that these developers were on the right track.

“Tell them to call me; I can help,” said Jessica Armstead of the Corcoran Group, who lives in East Harlem and also sells there.

Andrew Gerring, a managing director of Prudential Douglas Elliman who is responsible for marketing new developments, said brokers provide a broader reach for developers, with their e-mail messages to other brokers and advertising budgets. “You need a much more sophisticated approach,” he said. “They want to have their cake and eat it too.”

Eventually, Mr. Silver said, after the windows are installed and a showroom is complete, the developers plan to use Chris Halliburton, a broker at Warburg Realty, to market the apartments. “We don’t have the time to be full-time salesmen,” he said.