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High life at your fingertips

A virtual concierge will help provide service to buyers of luxury condos atop Two Liberty Place

By Alan J. Heavens

INQUIRER REAL ESTATE WRITER

Your wish is Jamie Cooperstein's command, but only if you buy one of the 123 condominiums (\$800,000 to \$15 million) that occupy the top 20 floors of Two Liberty Place.

Cooperstein is senior concierge of the Residences at Two Liberty. It's her job to find out as much as she can about each buyer, so she can anticipate every need after move-in day.

"If you want us to arrange your move, we'll do that, too," said Richard Oller, chairman of Madison Parke Management, the Philadelphia firm providing "five-star" concierge services to Two Liberty.

Cooperstein won't be a team of one: Alex H. Cohen, a senior vice president at Madison Parke, will be general manager of concierge services at Two Liberty, and there will be other concierges on duty 24 hours a day, to arrange for package pickup, car fetching, and grocery shopping.

But they also will be ably assisted by technology — a "virtual concierge" represented by a digital touch screen in every unit.

"If they want to call a taxi, they just touch this button, and the cab will be ordered," said David Tovissi, president of Criteria, the Dania Beach, Fla., company that is installing the system, designed by Vertlinc.

Oller said Cooperstein, who came to Two Liberty from the Rittenhouse Hotel, insisted that technology not replace the personal touch, but rather augment it.

"During these interviews [with buyers], I've developed a personal relationship with these people," Cooperstein said, "and I think I've gotten to know them well enough to be considered a friend — not the kind



MICHAEL BRYANT / Inquirer Staff Photographer

The icing on the cake: Jamie Cooperstein, senior concierge at the Residences at Two Liberty, shows the digital touch screen installed in each unit that can be used to request service. The technology is intended not to replace the personal touch from the concierge team, but to augment it.

that will go out for a drink, but someone they can depend upon.

"Yes, they have the piece of technology, but they always have the relationship," she said.

A touch screen will be installed either in the wall or freestanding on a counter in each condo, Tovissi said. Simply put, it's a high-tech video intercom.

And though the virtual-concierge system will be accessible with special software on the Internet, a firewall will limit access to residents and staff only.

Because Cooperstein will be inter-

viewing buyers when they sign the agreements of sale, "there won't be any need for a learning curve of six months or a year before everything is in place and working," Oller said. "That was . . . the plan, that the residents will be happy from day one."

The first residents are expected to begin moving in around the December holidays.

What has Cooperstein learned so far, in interviews with more than 30 buyers?

"I've just completed a three-hour interview with a resident," she said. "He has had a very successful life and

had plenty of details to share, enough to fill four pages of a yellow legal pad."

Not all the buyers have been that forthcoming.

"There have been two 30-minute interviews," she said. "But I was a journalism major, and I ask a lot of questions. Going into the interview, I make a cheat sheet of questions: Do you ever get a massage? Would you use our preferred dry cleaner or another? Do you need to have plants taken care of? Emergency contacts? Favorite author, flower, cocktail, what newspapers [do you] read?"

Other condo buildings offer concierge services, but Oller said none provide the level of service that Two Liberty will bring, noting that it is very much along the lines of what is available in Manhattan.

The needs of hotel guests and condo-building residents are very different, said Cohen, who was general manager at the Latham before joining Madison Parke as senior vice president.

"Hotel guests are only in residence for a short time, so there is a greater sense of urgency for your services," he said. The typical hotel-guest profile runs just one page. Residents of a building are served better if you can anticipate their needs before they ask, and that is the whole purpose of getting to know them as well as you are able from the beginning.

"These interviews are truly detailed," Cohen said. "We get into things such as the kind of theater and music they like. Their interests become our interests, so much so that when we know their favorite musician is coming to town, [we] get tickets for them.

"You need to be proactive, not reactive," he said.

The target group of buyers at Two Liberty is "individuals with sufficient income, with sufficient net worth, to support the lifestyle," Oller said. "But we're seeing a tremendous interest in both young professionals — two-earner couples who are both busily engaged in their careers — and empty-nesters looking for an easier and more energetic lifestyle in the city, and divorcees looking for a new lifestyle.



MICHAEL BRYANT / Inquirer Staff Photographer

You rang? With a touch on the screen, residents will be able to request dinner reservations, call for a taxi, or schedule maintenance. Units are priced from \$800,000 to \$15 million.

"All of these people in this demographic are looking for lifestyle services to make every day easy," he said.

The common denominator, Oller said, "is that everyone's needs are unique, but everyone is interested in a fitness center and a communal area" — the owner's lounge on the 37th floor that will be shared with a yet-to-be named "signature" restaurant to which the public will have access from separate elevators.

"People want neighborhood here, otherwise they wouldn't be moving to the city," said Oller, who moved to Society Hill after almost a lifetime in Whitmarsh. "You can sit in the suburbs and watch your flat-panel TV or drive to the mall and go to the movies, and if that's what you want to do that's fine. People moving in to Two Liberty want to be near other people."

In providing services, the concierge staff will honor residents' privacy, Oller said. "They can be as open as they want or not. We are looking for baseline, but we aren't going anywhere and neither are they, so the baseline can change a thousand times."

A resident's profile can change as often as it needs to, and the staff will respond to that, and continue to revisit it.

"We are not going to get copies of their medical records," he said. "Our concierge staff will be stationed on the 37th floor. They will establish intricate and intimate relationships with our residents, and the staff will update their profiles as situations change."

With either a touch on the panel or by picking up a phone, a resident can request maid service or technical support or repairs, and it will be done.

"Then we can monitor the quality of the vendors by talking to the residents afterward," Oller said. "This is not a hotel environment but a long-term relationship."

In a hotel, Cohen said, "you are creating a home away from home, and the expectation of services and amenities a little beyond what you have at home. This is home, so we need to make living here everything the resident wants it to be and imagines it to be — a paradise, if you will."

What about those people who are never happy?

"You never give up," Cohen said. "You never stop trying."

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