

Residential Real Estate**ON TINY PLOT IN CHELSEA,
A 12 STORY CONDO RISES**

By NADINE BROZAN

Think "sliver" and what comes to mind — at least in real estate parlance — is a needle-thin building that pierces the skyline and dwarfs its neighbors.

At first glance, the Paradigm, a 12-story residential condominium going up at 146-148 West 22nd Street in the heart of Chelsea, bears little resemblance to the structures shoehorned into narrow plots by developers in the early 1980's.

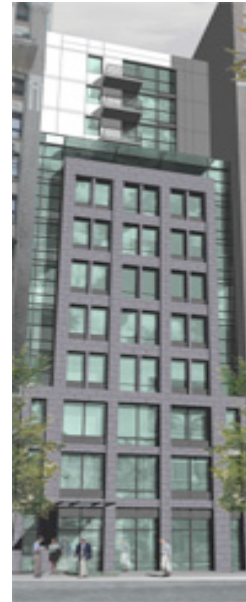
Technically, though, it qualifies as a sliver because it sits on a lot that measures less than the 45-foot minimum width required by a zoning law passed in 1983 to halt the proliferation of the slender structures. But the building does not violate the law, because of a provision that permits construction to a height equal to the tallest abutting wall if it fronts on a wide street, or to that of

the lower adjacent wall on a narrow street.

"Our plot is 40 by 90 feet, and when you have frontage that small, you are not allowed to build a tall building," said Kenneth Horn, the President and owner of Alchemy Properties, the developer of the site. But the shorter of the two buildings flanking his is 158 feet, so he was allowed to go that high, providing that a setback start at 95 feet. At 135 feet high, the Paradigm falls well within the limitations.

"Had the building next door been 70 feet, I could only have gone up 70 feet, and it wouldn't have made economic sense," Mr. Horn said.

Plans for the structure sailed through the approvals process last year. Built within allowable limits on a block that does not have landmark status, it required no special permits



or variances, nor did it have to be approved by the community board.

"They filed for new building approval on June 28, 2002, and got it on July 9," said Ilyse Fink, a spokeswoman for the Department of Buildings.

There was no opposition expressed to the project. "In fact, we have gotten a great response because the existing structure, which had been occupied by beverage ad toy distributors in the past, was extremely derelict," Mr. Horn said.

"It did pose a design challenge," said Marvin H. Meltzer, the architect and a partner in the firm of

Meltzer/Mandl, referring to the historically commercial nature of the area. "In communities or neighborhoods that never had a predominantly residential character before, as an architect you can either make it look like the rest of the buildings that are not residential or you can seize the opportunity to introduce a new architectural vocabulary."

His goal for the project, he added, was not to design a seamless continuation of the street wall. "You don't recreate something that was built in the late 1800's," he said. "You design something contemporary that reinforces the 1800 buildings, making its design stronger through contrast."

His first plan for the site –all colors, curves and

aluminum panels – provided a dramatic contrast to the existing buildings. "The client asked us to do something more in keeping with the block," he said.

He gave up the idea of curves, choosing instead to produce a sleek facade of steel gray granite punctuated by eight-foot windows. Mirrored glass lining the recesses that rise from the third to the ninth floors on the edges of the building's facade will reflect the building's stonework and that of its immediate neighbors. "This little move of mirror glass separating it from the existing buildings is key," Mr. Meltzer said. "It pops the building out."

The first floor will be retail space, and the floors above will have one apartment

each. Eight of the 12 units have three bedrooms and three bathrooms; the rest have two bedrooms and two baths. Living rooms are all positioned at the front facing West 22nd Street.

All the apartments have at least two balconies, and four have terraces, the largest of them 1,035 square feet. Prices range from \$1.4 million to \$2.2 million.

Asked why he had named the building Paradigm, Mr. Horn said: "We were creating a model of what we thought a new building should look like. We wanted to show that good clear thought went into it and it is not just a pile of bricks." And besides, he said, "I wanted people to ask what it means."