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## Steiner towers over NY film

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Steve Cuozzo

### REALTY CHECK

To anyone standing atop Steiner Studios' 25 Washington Ave. at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a pair of rooftop World War II radio towers piercing the sky can seem a transport back in time.

The spidery structures uncannily conjure the era of warships in the roiling Atlantic with which they communicated.

The activities planned for the floors beneath them are more peaceable: film production and education. Happily, Studios Chairman **Doug Steiner** plans to keep the towers in place and light them — "in an understated, blue-and-white way. They're not going to blink," he chuckled. (He's also chairman of

developer Steiner NYC, which is building The Hub, a 750-unit rental apartment tower near the Brooklyn Academy of Music, among other projects.)

Although Steiner took pains to keep the 1941-vintage, Art Deco 25 Washington Ave.'s exterior — including distinctive curved glass at the corners — looking much as it did when it served a number of US Navy support functions, it's no exercise in nostalgia. His company has pumped \$80 million to \$85 million into restoring and repurposing the 7-story, 220,000 square-foot property since taking control of it four years ago next month.

It will add 150,000 square feet to Steiner Studios' existing 224,000 square feet of production-related resources to support its 130,000 square feet of sound stages.

The building's completed transformation later this year will mark the latest expan-

sion of the burgeoning Steiner lot. Rebuilt from the ground up, it opened its doors in 2004 with Mel Brooks' "The Producers: The Movie Musical."

Today, its 10 sound stages on 20 acres make it the largest full-scale movie and TV production facility east of Hollywood.

The Studios, entered through a Paramount-style gate, are the glamourpusses of the 300-acre Navy Yard — a sprawling riverfront complex between the Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges that's confusing, colorful, imbued with a tangible sense of history and seething with creative energy.

Brooklyn College's Barry R. Feinstein Graduate School of Cinema has leased 70,000 square feet on the fifth and sixth floors of 25 Washington Ave. and is expected to start classes in 2015. Steiner will use the other floors for its production-support facilities.



Ed Lederman



## Abbot Genser

They'll include set-construction shops, wardrobe workshops, editing and other post-production services, and even a fitness center and a second commissary — part of a commitment to offer filmmakers everything they need on-site.

"Our goal was always to have everything under one roof, so to speak, which is the Los Angeles studio model," Steiner said.

"At the Navy Yard, where we have so much room, we hope to create that kind of environment."

In under 10 years, Steiner has joined, and in some ways surpassed, the older Silvercup Studio and Kaufman Astoria studios in Queens in the "Hollywood on the Hudson" (truly East River) pantheon.

TV series, including "Boardwalk Empire" and "The Carrie Diaries," shoot at Steiner on sets almost too large and detailed for a first-time visitor to grasp. Movies made there recently include "Sex and the City," "Inside Man" and "The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3."

Thriving Steiner Studios, like its (mostly) friendly rivals, is battering on a local moviemaking boom accelerated by a 30 percent state tax credit for productions that do most of their shoots here.

But Steiner says part of his studio's success is also its ability to "tap into the best crew base in the world." Producers also flock to its column-free sound stages, as

large as 27,000 square feet equipped with full grids to support heavy electric loads and massive silent heating, ventilating and A/C systems.

Next in the works: an ambitious Steiner Media Campus on the Yard's 20-acre Naval Annex — a wild, overgrown zone resembling the High Line in its pre-park era, but with buildings. The abandoned structures, including a thoroughly spooky naval hospital and a facility for Navy propaganda films, today are romantic ruins.

Pending infrastructure work is to be largely funded by state and city contributions, Steiner plans to "restore them to their former splendor" for use by media and "academic partners." A former Officers Club largely hidden behind foliage will be reopened first; the full buildout in a

\$347 million master plan is expected to take 12 years, he said.

Emerging from a decades-long limbo, the Navy Yard — where warships from the Civil War ironclad Monitor to the WWII battleship Missouri were built — is officially an industrial park owned by the city and managed by the nonprofit Brooklyn Navy Yards Development Corp.

The Bloomberg administration pumped in \$200 million for infrastructure.

The BNYDC has helped leverage \$700 million in private investment, drawing 330 "industrial" tenants to 4 million leaseable square feet.

Some 6,400 people today work at the Yard — few compared with the 70,000 during its WWII heyday, but many more than the 3,600 in 2001.

scuozzo@nypost.com

