

BEYOND BUZZWORDS

Social Interaction is the Ultimate Luxury at Back Bay Tower

Raffles Rejects Cliches of High-End Development

BY JORDAN WARSHAW
SPECIAL TO BANKER & TRADESMAN



Jordan Warshaw

It might surprise people that as the developer of Raffles Boston Back Bay Hotel & Residences, I shudder at the “L word,” but ask anyone from our team and they will confirm: “luxury” is all but forbidden in our marketing materials. Adventure? Yes. Whimsical? Yes. Charm? Yes. Warmth and comfort? Yes, and yes.

Luxury? Yawn. It is difficult to think about using a word that is now used to describe everything from shampoo to pet products in conjunction with something that is truly unique and special. Make no mistake though, Raffles Boston will offer an unprecedented residential and hotel experience in the heart of the Back Bay with stunning residence and guest room finishes by world-renowned designers that certainly check all the boxes for the L word.

But that alone is not what makes this building unique. From top to bottom, Raffles Boston will showcase and celebrate what makes the Raffles brand so special: a sense of adventure and style,

gracious, warm and intuitive hospitality and thoughtful, locally inspired design, all while enhancing the cosmopolitan charm of the Back Bay. There are 16 distinct spaces for Raffles Boston residents to gather, to socialize, to work, to relax, to rejuvenate, to eat and to drink, each with its own distinct design and sense of place.

Amenity Spaces Built for Spontaneity

Raffles’ parent company, Accor, has embraced the term “emotional luxury,” and this is what has made Raffles’ warm, friendly hospitality so renowned across the world, and it is what Raffles Boston’s world of spaces and experiences creates. It is about the way a guest feels when entering a magnificent space, or perhaps it is about having an unforgettable meal in a striking restaurant, or discovering unique destinations or even nooks within a familiar destination. This is the feeling that Raffles Boston will create. Our 35-story building is made for daily discovery.

Perhaps the word “luxury” will gain new meaning in a post-COVID world: the luxury of human connection; the luxury of spontaneous conversations; the luxury of gathering together for the sole purpose of having a wonderful time. Maybe people will start thinking of “luxury” less as a branding term (like the latest pretentious,

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The 33-story Raffles Boston Back Bay Hotel & Residences is scheduled for completion in 2022.

overused word – the “B Word”), and more of an experiential term: “social luxury.”

Among the building’s bevy of spaces, residents of Raffles Boston will find six intimate amenity spaces that are exclusive to them, allowing them to connect with one another, make new friendships, and discover a range of revelry and entertainment. The emotional luxury of social interaction and of enjoying unique venues with friends will be at a premium within our project.

There is The Secret Garden, a sunlit garden-like space that transports residents with a Singaporean-inspired tea experience; The Residents’ Library, for lounging, reading and fireside conversation; and The Emerald Terrace for al fresco merriment enhanced by views of the city busting below.

Opportunities for play abound in The Sports Lounge, where residents can watch movies or the big game, socialize, play cards around the professional poker table, practice their swing in a dedicated golf simulator room or play billiards on a full-size table. Culinary interests can be indulged in the Nantucket Cottage Tasting Kitchen and Wine Lounge; and the Residents’ Private Dining Room provides an intimate venue for entertaining friends and family.

Creating Meaningful Connections

Additionally, residents have access to the full range of Raffles Boston hotel amenities, including six different food and beverage destinations, ranging from a 2-story

signature restaurant on Trinity Place to the Raffles Patisserie on Stuart Street.

Our Sky Lobby is a 3-story space that connects residents and guests with a diversity of amenity spaces, including the Raffles Writers’ Lounge and four distinct dining and cocktail venues. Health and wellness abound with a stunningly designed fitness center overlooking the city, a residents- and guests-only spa with private and couples’ treatment rooms offering the latest in hydrotherapy and mind-body rejuvenation and a 20-meter indoor pool complete with an oversized hot tub, rain showers and lounge areas.

As I step back and consider the thoughtful design and purpose behind each of these spaces here at Raffles Boston, as well as at Raffles properties across the globe, what most excites me most is the idea of creating a destination unique to Boston, where building and neighborhood residents meet and form community, or where a local strikes up conversation with an international traveler and forges a meaningful connection. The experience, the connection, the discovery – isn’t that so much more meaningful than yet another dose of “luxury”?

And what is the “B Word,” you may ask? Bespoke, of course... but don’t even get me started on that one.

Jordan Warshaw is president of The Noanet Group, which is partnering with Saunders Hotel Group and Cain International on development of the Raffles Boston at 430 Stuart St.

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Hotel Developer Stebbins Dead at 67

Greater Boston hotel developer Mark Stebbins, co-founder of hotel developer-operator XSS Hotels, died suddenly on June 17.

Stebbins was 67, according to an obituary released Monday by New Hampshire-based design-build firm PROCON, of which Stebbins was chairman and CEO. No cause of death was released but PROCON’s statement said the event was unexpected and peaceful “after enjoying a beautiful sunset with his wife, Sally”.

Stebbins, a Manchester, New Hampshire native, founded Schleicher & Stebbins Hotels in 1995 to develop an manage hotels throughout the Northeast. Known as XSS Hotels since 2008, the company owns prominent properties like the Sheraton Framingham Hotel & Conference Center, the AC Hotel Downtown Boston, and was the primary force behind the development of four hotels in Chelsea in recent years.

XSS also led the revitalization of downtown Portsmouth, New Hampshire, building three hotels on long-vacant parcels cleared by mid-20th century urban renewal policies.

Stebbins’ father founded PROCON, and Stebbins joined the firm himself in 1979 after a stint at Chase Bank in New York City to gain experience in real estate and finance, where he met his wife, Sally Steb-



Mark Stebbins

bins. Stebbins eventually rose to lead PROCON and grow it into the largest design-build construction company in the state.

Stebbins also helped grow XSS into the self-described owner of “largest number of hotel rooms in Greater Boston.” According to PROCON’s statement, he also owned a fabric company, a biotech company, a senior living development company and a commercial real estate brokerage at the time of his death.

“He truly loved his work and the people he worked with. Many of his business partners became close friends, and one of his greatest joys was working alongside his children, John and Jennifer, as they joined the business in the last decade,” PROCON said in a statement.

Stebbins also made his mark in the state’s philanthropic sector, donating money and time to a range of causes.

In addition to his wife, mother, brother and sister, Stebbins leaves three children and six grandchildren.

A memorial to Stebbins will be livestreamed on June 29 at 3 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the Stebbins family is asking well-wishers to donate to one of a list of six charities: Granite United Way, Waypoint, Boys and Girls Club of Manchester, Easterseals of NH, Gather and Families First