

Alexander Aghravi, 30

Senior project manager at the Moinian Group

Alex Aghravi landed a job at the Moinian Group after graduating from Penn State University in 2016, and was thrown into the deep end almost immediately.

Aghravi's first project at the firm — one of the country's largest privately held real estate investment companies — was to help close out the development of Sky, Moinian's 71-story, 1,175-unit multifamily behemoth in Midtown Manhattan. Roughly 20 percent of the building was leased at the time, but Aghravi's job was to evaluate the remaining work of every other unit, one by one, to get them across the finish line.

"I used to take an elevator from the lobby to the top floor and walk down the stairs of the entire building, go in every single unit, and update progress," the Long Island native said. "Oh, this one is missing a vanity, the floor needs to be repaired, the fridge isn't working — a complete punch list. So I know the ins and outs of that building."

These days, as a senior project manager, Aghravi leads ground-up and redevelopment projects for Moinian, as well as capital improvements across the firm's roughly 3,000-unit New York City residential portfolio. Aghravi has focused more recently on office-to-resi conversions. That includes altering about 80,000 square feet at 90 John Street into 114 residences, a project completed in January and now nearly fully leased, as well as reconfiguring 100,000 square feet at 17 Battery Place into 138 apartments, which Aghravi said is approaching its occupancy approval. He is currently working on the pre-development phase of another 230-unit conversion project.

"We need more supply on the market, and with the city on board we're making a major push to solve the housing crisis," Aghravi said. "It's really exciting to be a part of that and see these spaces transform from offices into beautiful apartments, and help New Yorkers find a home." —N.T.

Jocelyn Barahona, 30

Architect at Elkus Manfredi Architects

When Jocelyn Barahona was a little girl, she'd travel between her hometown of Los Angeles and her parents' birthplace in El Salvador. It was seeing the contrasting characteristics of the homes and buildings in both places during these trips that kindled her interest in architecture.

"No one in my family was an architect at the time, but just being able to see how culture influences the built environment got me curious about the industry," Barahona said. "That's really what piqued my interest. Honestly, I was like, 'OK, clearly lifestyle and architecture go hand in hand.'"

In 2021, Barahona joined Elkus Manfredi, where she has mostly been working on research facility projects. One that holds a special place for her is the Boston Children's Hospital project at 421 Park Drive in the Massachusetts capital. As an architect on this project, she led the fit-out design efforts for its research and laboratory facility and worked closely with the hospital's research team to ensure all of their needs would be met.

She also advocated for and implemented natural light features in the vivarium procedure rooms for animal testing — an uncommon feature, but one she believes is highly appreciated by the people who work in institutional buildings.

"We're very lucky to be able to work with Boston Children's. Working with them is very different from working with a developer," she said. "It's really nice that you're not working on something that's speculative. It's based on what their current needs are, and how we can make that happen."



Alexander Aghravi.



Jocelyn Barahona.

Looking toward the future, Barahona could see herself leading as a principal at a firm, helping to manage the business side, including bringing in new talent and helping shape strategy.

"I would like to be able to be a little bit more influential," she said. "Not just someone who's working at a firm, but someone who is helping shape that firm." —A.Schiavo

Tom Bentsen, 29

Director of engineering at One Madison Avenue for SL Green Realty

Tom Bentsen went big with his job change in August 2022.

He transitioned from the prominent engineering firm JB&B to SL Green Realty, New York City's largest office landlord. Specifically, Bentsen came on to direct the engineering work at SL Green's One Madison Avenue, probably the city's most closely watched adaptive reuse project. Largely completed in late 2023, it included adding a 26-story office building to the address' 19th century podium.

To this day, Bentsen is responsible for the 1.4 million-square-foot One Madison's mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection and management systems. His One Madison work also required coordinating with the commissioning provider and construction manager, and their subcontractors, on a pull-the-plug test in June 2024 — that is, simulating over several hours a complete breakdown in energy supply to the tower, whose anchor tenant is IBM and whose other tenants include cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase and cybersecurity firm Palo Alto Networks. (Spoiler: The test went off without a hitch.)

"Now I'm trying to actually make these systems run as efficiently as they can and still hold the contractors from the past accountable for the work, to get that done properly," Bentsen said.

Meanwhile, Bentsen also works on what he describes as mini-projects — including a dedicated outdoor air system for One Madison and related air pressurization issues



Tom Bentsen.

— and responding to any problems that might arise.

Bentsen grew up on Long Island, and said he always wanted to work in the big city. He turned an interest in thermodynamics into a mechanical engineering degree with high honors from Binghamton University. His JB&B experience introduced Bentsen to the wider field beyond the HVAC work he was most familiar with. And he said the pandemic, which forced him (and a lot of others) behind a computer more, gave him an appreciation for turning designs into realities — something he can do in his current role.

"For now," Bentsen said, "I'm really interested in how pen and paper — or computer and software — meet the physical world of our operations." —T.A.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY THE MOINIAN GROUP; COURTESY ELKUS MANFREDI ARCHITECTS; LEON BARBER