

## Five-Diamond Downtown

An Interview with  
**Gary E. Schweikert, Regional Vice President  
 and Managing Director, Trump SoHo New York**



*The Duplex Terrace Penthouse living room (left);  
 The rooftop pool and spa (above); the Penthouse tub at dusk (below)*

**EDITORS' NOTE** Gary Schweikert was appointed to his current post of Managing Director in September 2014, and in July 2015 took on the additional role of Regional Vice President for Trump Hotels. Previously, he founded Strata Hospitality Group and was President of Jumeirah Hospitality and Leisure USA while concurrently serving as General Manager of the Jumeirah Essex House. His career also includes nine years as the Regional Vice President of Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, and Managing Director of New York's historic Plaza Hotel, as well as senior management positions within Hilton Hotels, including at the legendary Waldorf Astoria.



Gary E. Schweikert

**PROPERTY BRIEF** The first full-service luxury hotel in the neighborhood, Trump SoHo® New York's ([trumpsobohotel.com](http://trumpsobohotel.com)) 391 spacious guest rooms and suites feature floor-to-ceiling windows offering unparalleled views of the city's spectacular skyline and the Hudson River. Owners and hotel guests will enjoy world-class dining at Koi SoHo, a new signature cocktail lounge Mr. Jones, the seasonal poolside Bar d'Eau, and the utmost in personal service with signature Trump Attaché service. The Spa at Trump® with its two levels of pampering services provides New York its first authentic luxury Hammam. The property is a member of the Trump Hotels portfolio.

### Where does the market stand today and how challenging is it?

New York City has 110 hotels in the pipeline and some of these are in our backyard, which does present a challenging market. A few of the new properties opening in the middle of next year will solicit our customer base, so we are crafting our strategy accordingly. Downtown continues to be a magnet for travelers who are looking for something different from Midtown, and we're seeing interest from across the globe. It's not just New Yorkers who are looking for some new place to try – travelers from every continent who are accustomed to the great hotels in Midtown want to experience a similar level of luxury but in a different locale.

The shift in location is also somewhat generational. Certain travelers are not inclined to stay where their fathers or grandfathers stayed, which is typically a beautiful hotel in Midtown; they want to try something new, but no less luxurious.

### What is someone coming here going to find?

Trump SoHo continues to be the only five-diamond hotel in the neighborhood. We set the tone for what luxury hotel experiences are like Downtown, so we incorporate into our guest visit all the great things this neighborhood offers. There is a huge emphasis on culture, as well as the usual sightseeing attractions.

When guests are at Trump SoHo, they experience a different perspective: they receive the same level of luxury service, although perhaps more genuine and friendly than what they've experienced uptown.

In addition to the service levels, guests are in for a treat once they go upstairs because the views from here are unparalleled. One can see in any direction 50 miles away from where we stand and a perspective of New York City that cannot be found elsewhere.



### Trump Hotel Collection is continuing to grow but they maintain that local feel. What are the consistencies among properties?

The brand demonstrates an overriding dedication and devotion to luxury, so guests know they're going to have a first-class experience no matter which Trump hotel they visit. We also do an

exceptional job of making sure the hotel represents the best of the community in which it resides – that could be in design, in food and beverage touches, or in the menu offerings.

There is always going to be a local element that shows we respect the community we're operating in but across the globe, there is a style of service that is clearly five-star when it comes to Trump Hotels.

### How challenging is the food and beverage part of the business and what are the keys to being successful?

We have partners who know what is needed to keep the hotel food and beverage offering vibrant. Additionally, our in-house team has curated unique and vibrant banquet, catering, and in-room dining menus that bring options to every guest that are inspired from international flavors and modern cuisine.

### Are you happy with where the hotel product is today and are there changes on the horizon?

Our ownership group is highly engaged and wants the property to remain in a dominant market position despite new competition coming online. I dedicate significant time to forging a strong, trusted partnership with the owners while remaining a strong brand advocate. We believe that when all partners and stakeholders are aligned, our guests benefit with an upgraded, innovative, and luxurious product.

There is a design review underway now to renovate all of the guest rooms for the entire hotel – new design as well as new furnishings top to bottom. There is also discussion about redoing lobby spaces and there has been a strong investment in infrastructure as well including in-room technology and entertainment.

### How challenging is forecasting today when booking cycles continue to shrink?

A year ago, we saw multiples of reservations coming in 45-plus days out; now we're looking 0 to 10 days out. The industry has trained the traveler to wait until the last minute to search for discount availability, and this shrinking booking window is what we're faced with as the new normal.

### What do you look for in hiring talent?

We have found a lot of success in carefully choosing those who fit our culture. We expect them to have a high degree of accountability and responsiveness. A strong foundation of our brand culture is to encourage every associate to bring their genuine best to each guest, and to each other, at all times. ●