

## A story worth telling, one building at a time

**ERIC NUSBAUM** Assistant Editor, JTNews

Mark Richard Schuster did not set out to become an author. But after the Seattle entrepreneur completed development on Mosler Lofts, the Belltown condo project that has become his signature achievement, he felt he had a story worth telling. Schuster's book, *Lofty Pursuits: Repairing the World One Building at a Time*, was published in September.

"I'm a big reader but I didn't really have a goal to write a book," Schuster told JTNews. "What happened was the story of this building. Mosler Lofts was the catalyst."

Mosler Lofts, finished in 2007, was the first high-rise condo in Seattle to be certified LEED Silver. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design green-building rating system sets benchmarks for environmentally friendly design and materials.

"When Mosler Lofts was done, the reason it became the catalyst was that it became the most nationally acclaimed and awarded project of its kind in the country in 2008," Schuster said. "It became a landmark expression of sustainability and design."

In *Lofty Pursuits*, Schuster uses the story of Mosler Lofts as the centerpiece for a book about his personal history, his family, and his community. The book is also a plea for ethical business practices. Schuster uses Mosler Lofts to demonstrate how a business can balance profit seeking and principles.

*Lofty Pursuits* strikes an informal tone. Schuster's prose is direct in a casual, face-to-face sort of way; the book reads as if

the author was sitting across a table and simply telling his story. His tone, perhaps, is the result of Schuster's method in composing the book.

"I spent a year writing down my thoughts on sticky notes, napkins at restaurants, pieces of paper, you name it," Schuster said.



Mark Schuster at the Mosler Lofts construction site.

"I had a drawer in my office and I threw all those ideas in that drawer. Eventually I started to consolidate them and organize them into 875 pages of transcription."

Finally, with an editor, Schuster trimmed his thoughts down to a workable manuscript. In its published form, *Lofty Pursuits* is a manageable 215 pages — not quite as ambitious in scope, as say,

the condo project that inspired it. But the book is as much about family and community as it is about business.

"I wanted to share that story [Mosler Lofts] and in doing so, it gave me an opportunity to share my own personal story as a businessman and a member of

*Pursuits*, Schuster outlines the influence of his family on his approach to business. The building itself is named for his maternal grandfather, George Mosler, who encouraged Schuster to pursue his dreams in business and reminded him of the importance of an ethical approach. The book presents family, Judaism, philanthropy, community, and business as intertwined means to make the world a better place.

To communicate this message, Schuster turns to different anecdotes from his life. As the book follows the conception and eventual construction of Mosler Lofts, it turns also to stories of failed business ventures, to a trip to Israel Schuster took with the Anti-Defamation League, of which he is a big supporter, to recollections of Schuster's days as a Boy Scout.

Now, Schuster says, he hopes readers will realize that the message applies beyond real estate development.

"I think it's bigger than one product type," he said. "I think it's a philosophy of doing business and leading your life. What I try to do is take *tikkun olam* outside of what I learned at home, outside of synagogue, outside of temple youth camp."

*Lofty Pursuits* is on sale at Elliott Bay Book Co. and both Third Place Books locations, with availability soon at Barnes and Noble in downtown Seattle and University Village. Schuster hopes people read it, but he isn't too concerned about sales.

"I didn't write the book to become a New York Times bestseller," he said. "I wrote the book because I had a story I wanted to share."

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