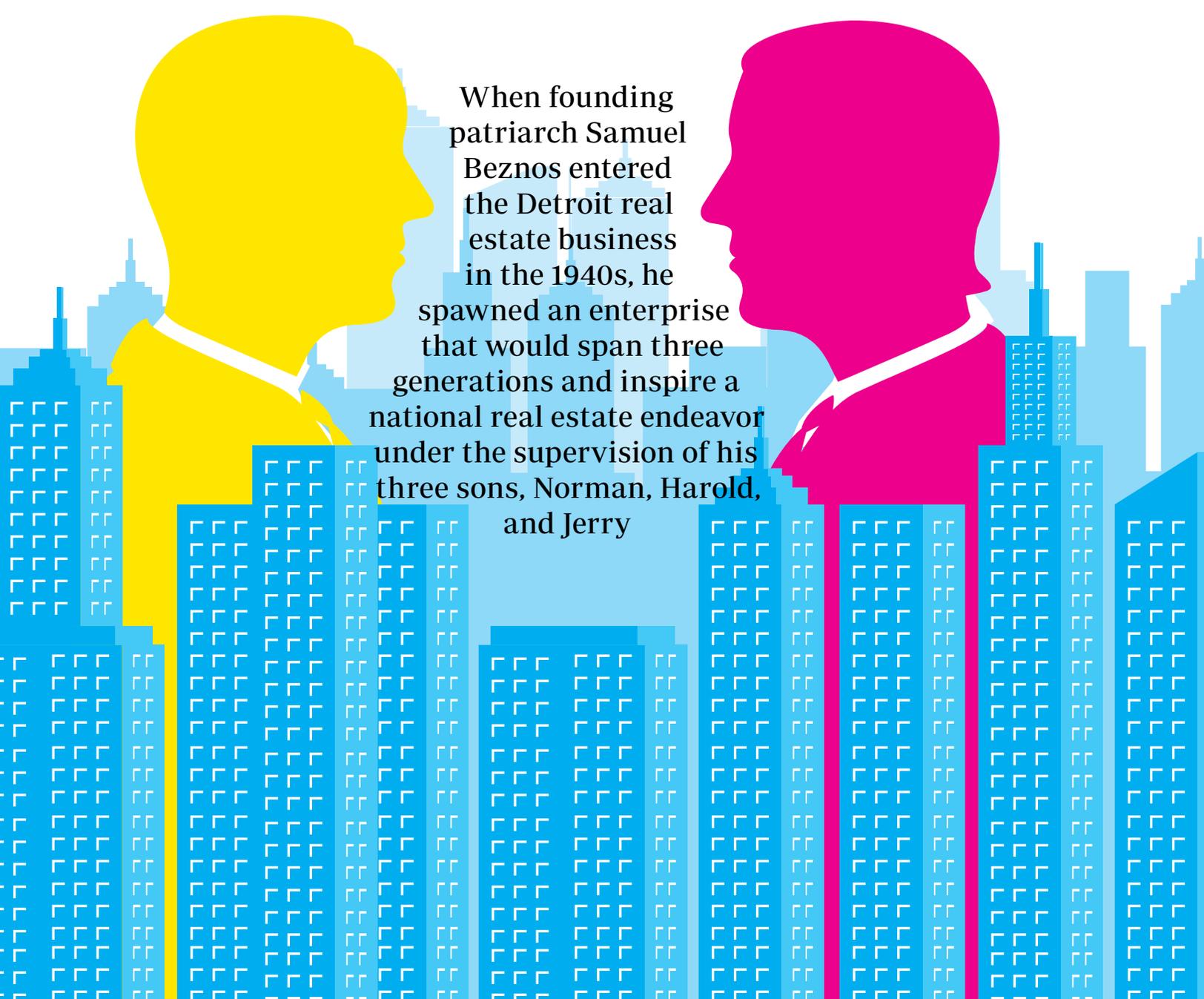


Like Father, Like Son

By PORCSHE N. MORAN *Illustration by ANNA BECK*



When founding patriarch Samuel Beznos entered the Detroit real estate business in the 1940s, he spawned an enterprise that would span three generations and inspire a national real estate endeavor under the supervision of his three sons, Norman, Harold, and Jerry

Samuel Beznos has been involved in real estate since his early teens; his family has co-owned and operated Beztak Properties—a real estate development, construction, investment, and third-party management company—for more than sixty years. Now, as the CEO of the Farmington Hills, Michigan-based company, Samuel says there wasn't a specific moment when his uncles and father, Harold Beznos, handed him the reins of the family business, continuing the Beznos family's legacy. It was far more fluid; the family has always worked together.

"The past fifteen years, I naturally started taking on more responsibility," Samuel says. "It was an evolutionary, organic process. Over the past seven or eight years, I have begun to feel like I am truly in control of the operations; people come to me for guidance instead of going to my father or my uncles."

Of course, he first had to gain the necessary credentials. In 2002, after earning a master's degree in real estate finance from New York University, Samuel moved back to Michigan to work full-time for Beztak Properties.

"Taking over the developmental and managerial supervision was a huge opportunity for me," he says. "I was fortunate to already have a great, loyal team, many of whom had been a part of the company for more than thirty years. We enjoy an outstanding reputation for quality of design, construction, and managerial services. In a sense, I could enter the race and just run with it. I take pride in perpetuating the Luptak and Beznos family legacies."

After immigrating to the United States from Poland, founder Samuel Beznos started the company in the 1940s, calling it Bird Realty. He purchased and managed



Harold Beznos

Cofounder, Partner

Beztak Properties

Farmington Hills, MI

apartment buildings in Detroit, as well as land in the nearby suburbs. He also created a brokerage business, buying and selling houses in the city. After his death in 1966, Samuel's sons, Norman, Harold, and Jerry, took over the business. As it grew and became more well known, the brothers created a partnership with a family friend, attorney Jerry Luptak, to buy the entire Buhl Realty Company. They named the joint venture Beztak to represent both families. At that time, theirs was the highest-valued real estate transaction in Michigan's history.

"I used to hang around with my father at his office when I was a kid," Harold says. "I was in law school at Michigan State University the first time my father asked me to work on zoning for one of his properties. It was a success, and I found the process to be exciting."

Today, Beztak's portfolio includes commercial, office, retail, senior living, and single-family and multifamily residential properties across the Midwest, the East, the Southeast, and the Southwest United States. Over the years, the firm has developed more than fifteen thousand residences. Currently, more than seventeen thousand residences are under property management, with more than seven hundred people employed across the country. Outside of its Michigan headquarters, Beztak has had a satellite office in Boca Raton, Florida, since the early 1980s, where the next generation of the Luptak family, Paola Luptak, lives and oversees operations. There's an additional regional office in Tucson, Arizona.

"The foundation my father laid is what we have built upon. It is, I believe, the ongoing commitment to his vision and character that has secured our success," Harold says. "He instilled in us the importance of following through on your commitments. I am

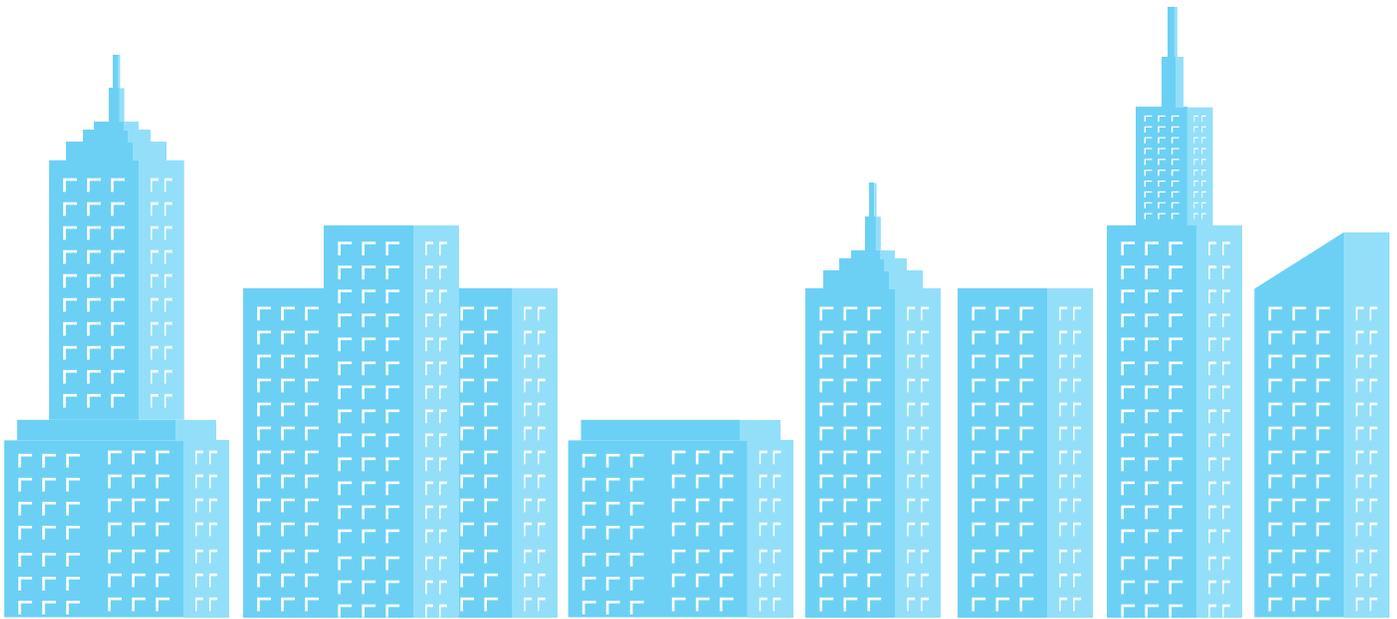


Samuel Beznos

CEO, Partner

Beztak Properties

Farmington Hills, MI



especially gratified that we have been able to make and maintain strong relationships with both partners and associates, many of whom we have worked with for more than thirty-five years.”

Both Harold and Samuel attribute the company’s longevity to its reputation for developing forward-thinking, innovative properties.

“The real estate business is constantly changing,” Harold says. “You have to have a plan and a vision to prepare for what might come. Because we’ve always taken a more conservative approach, we haven’t had the liabilities that could have hurt us in times when the market has been down. We have properties that are nearly fifty years old that successfully compete with new properties and are worth more than when we first developed them.”

Samuel points to his 2012 purchase of a complex of midrise towers, comprising 589 foreclosed apartments and condominiums in Miami. He bought the portfolio for \$110 million and was able to reposition and remarket the properties for double the cost.

“The most gratifying thing is the challenge of finding and securing land and then figuring out what to put on it,” Harold says. “Each development is unique. We are creative in building properties that are tailored to the specific market or neighborhood.”

Despite his achievements, Samuel is not resting on his laurels. He spends his work hours traveling around the country,

visiting Beztak’s existing properties. He is also constantly looking for new business prospects. One of his priorities is to increase Beztak’s footprint in the senior living industry. Beztak currently has a roster of six luxury senior living communities, as well as two in development.

“We want to continue to advance into new markets and become more of a national player,” Samuel says. “But we are not a volume-based developer. We work on three to four projects at a time and focus on quality.”

In turn, Samuel is determined to enrich the customer experience by keeping Beztak current, investing in technology that improves business operations and reduces paper usage.

“The real estate industry has been consistently lagging behind other industries when it comes to technology,” Samuel says. “We want to provide ease and convenience to all of our residents. We always try to be proactive in anticipating what people want, such as high-speed Wi-Fi, LED lights, and mobile apps.”

As Beztak Properties continues to evolve and expand, Samuel says the groundwork that his family and the Luptak family have laid serves as a foundation for mapping out the company’s future. “I might pursue or conceive new opportunities, but the core values that we started Beztak with will remain the same,” he explains. “We will never cut corners to be more profitable. We are always looking for ways to put out the best product possible.” ■

BEZTAK OVER THE YEARS

1940s: Samuel Beznos establishes his real estate business in Detroit

1966: Norman, Harold, and Jerry Beznos inherit their father’s real estate business

1970: The Beznos brothers merge Beznos Realty into Beztak Properties

2002: Harold’s son Samuel joins Beztak Properties full-time

2007: Beztak opens All Seasons of Rochester Hills, the first in the company’s All Seasons brand of high-end senior living communities

2012: Beztak purchases 589 foreclosed apartment and condominium residences for \$110 million in Miami, only to resell individual residences for double the initial investment

2017: Beztak announces plans to codevelop a six-story, mixed-use apartment building in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, DC; the project is slated to open in early 2018