

Bahman Batmanghelidj, Northern Virginia developer, dies at 83

By [Bart Barnes](#)

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Bahman “Batman” Batmanghelidj, a Northern Virginia real estate wheeler-dealer and developer who helped transform the once-rural Dulles Airport corridor in western Fairfax County into a network of roads, housing, offices and shopping centers, died April 25 at a rehabilitation center in Fairfax County. He was 83.

The cause was complications from Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases, said a daughter, Sahar Batmanghelidj.

An Iranian-born businessman, Mr. Batmanghelidj left his homeland as it was in the throes of the Islamic revolution that deposed the western-backed shah in 1979. Mr. Batmanghelidj soon became one of the most visible players in the high-stakes Northern Virginia real estate bonanza of the 1980s and early 1990s.

But in 1996, facing a downturn in real estate values after the savings-and-loan collapse earlier in the decade, Mr. Batmanghelidj declared personal bankruptcy. He was financially overextended with millions of dollars in loans he could not repay, and he owed hundreds of thousands more in back taxes. He defaulted on a loan backed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for one of his projects.

“I am tired. I am through with my grand plans,” he told The Washington Post in 1996.

Creditors took back most of his assets, including a 400-acre horse farm in Middleburg, Va. His 327,000-square-foot Village Center shopping center at Dulles was sold to a partnership for \$45 million in 1999.

He emerged from bankruptcy with a fraction of his former holdings but continued to do business on a reduced scale, and away from the public spotlight, as president of Batman Corp.

He did business as Batman, said his daughter, because that name was a household word to millions of Americans. And, she said, it was easier to say than Batmanghelidj (pronounced bat-man-glitch).

Bahman Batmanghelidj was born March 23, 1936, in Tehran, where his father was a wealthy businessman. At 8, he was sent to boarding school in England. He graduated in 1959 from St. Peter’s College at the University of Oxford, where he played rugby and was a competitive boxer.

He then returned to Iran and was a businessman and developer whose projects included a ski resort near Tehran, a telephone system and roads. He left most of his money behind when he immigrated to America shortly before the 1979 rise to power of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Still, there was enough money for him to begin buying up parcels of land along the Dulles corridor. Among the largest and best known of his projects was the 318-acre McNair Farms development near the airport. Early

purchasers of housing there complained to the news media that amenities they had been promised failed to materialize.

During his rise as an American businessman, Mr. Batmanghelidj gave \$340,000 in campaign contributions to Republican and Democratic candidates for state and local offices in jurisdictions where he sought to build. His contributions included \$100,000 to L. Douglas Wilder (D), who was elected governor of Virginia in 1989. (Mr. Batmanghelidj had become a naturalized U.S. citizen the year before.)

Survivors include his wife of 40 years, Roshanak Ram Batmanghelidj of Vienna, Va.; four children, Nahal Batmanghelidj of Brooklyn, N.Y., Sahar Batmanghelidj of Minneapolis, and Leila Batmanghelidj and Bahman Batmanghelidj Jr., both of Seattle; three sisters; a brother; and four grandchildren.

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