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City Room



Architect of Hearst Tower Chosen for Park Avenue Site

By DAVID W. DUNLAP



David W. Dunlap/The New York Times (left), Foster & Partners/L&L Holding Company (right)

The office tower at 425 Park Avenue as it now appears (left), and as Norman Foster has envisioned it in a conceptual design prepared for the developer David W. Levinson.

Norman Foster of Foster & Partners, the architect of Hearst Tower and of the planned 2 World Trade Center, has been chosen to redesign 425 Park Avenue, a nondescript 55-year-old white brick office tower on a prime site, between 55th and 56th Streets.

The preliminary conceptual design by Mr. Foster has few of the structural pyrotechnics evident in his other New York projects: the diagonal grid and crimped corners of Hearst Tower or the diamond-shaped pinnacles of 2 World Trade Center. It was chosen instead for its provision of common areas throughout the building where occupants can gather informally.

“The whole idea of office space is to have places where you can have an intersection of ideas, areas of collaboration,” said David W. Levinson, the chairman and chief executive of L&L Holding Company, which expects to control the site in 2015, when the reconstruction would begin.



Foster & Partners/L&L Holding Company

One of the common areas planned for the future 425 Park Avenue building.

Mr. Foster was picked from an invited field of four internationally renowned architects — starchitects — who competed for the 425 Park Avenue commission. The others were Zaha Hadid of Zaha Hadid Architects, Rem Koolhaas of OMA, and Richard Rogers of Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners.

“We spent many hours with each of the firms talking about the concepts over a period of many months,” Mr. Levinson said. As each of the four proposals evolved, he said, it grew tougher and tougher to make a final call. Among the criteria applied to the winning choice, he said, were the prospective costs of the building and the architects’ familiarity with working in New York City.

The public will have a chance to second-guess Mr. Levinson's choice on Oct. 19 at the Municipal Art Society's Summit for New York City, when all four proposals will be on view.



David W. Dunlap/The New York Times

David W. Levinson in his office at 142 West 57th Street.