

Original 2 W.T.C. Architect Says He Hasn't Seen New Designs

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The morning after developers revealed new designs and a new architect for Two World Trade Center, the building's original mastermind was honored at a groundbreaking ceremony. But the event was for 425 Park Ave., a Midtown highrise office building, and Lord Norman Foster, the architect being honored, was said to have been removed from the World Trade center project as recently as April.

The Wednesday morning groundbreaking was a celebration of the new office complex. The Foster-designed building would leave an "indelible mark on New York City's most iconic and important commercial neighborhood ... Midtown East's first 21st Century icon," Robert Lapidus, of developer L&L Holding, said.

Discussion of the new World Trade Center skyscraper was decidedly more hushed.

In 2005, Foster designed the original plans for Two World Trade Center, the fourth and final tower in a complete trade center. His design presented a tall, slim building with an angular top comprised of four massive diamond-shaped skylights. But when Rupert Murdoch-led media companies 21st Century Fox and News Corp. entered a non-binding agreement to lease the building, Foster's plan was tossed James Murdoch, who led the hunt for a new 21st Century Fox headquarters, reportedly found Foster's design too bank-like and unsuitable for a media company. Murdoch tapped Danish designer Bjarke Ingels to design a new building. The plans were finalized Tuesday with the reveal of Ingels' Two World Trade Center design: an asymmetric tiered structure with outdoor space for gardens.

"The big issue is that the original design was very much designed to be a financial institution," Ingels said in an interview with Capital. "So, it had the typical floor plates of offices for bankers and for lawyers, and what Fox and News Corp. was looking for was like big, continuous open floor plates for a more creative workspace. So, in that sense, there was a lot of things where the original design simply wouldn't fit."

425 Park Ave also aims high. 897 feet tall and occupying an entire city block, the building is the latest in a series of large developments along midtown's upper border. During the groundbreaking, Daniel Humm and Will Guidara, the chef and restaurateur responsible for the acclaimed restaurants 11 Madison Park and NoMad announced that they would be opening a new venture on 425 Park's ground floor.

And it was all Foster would discuss. Before and after the groundbreaking, he kept to small circles of conversation. He posed politely for photographs, signed an attendee's commemorative wooden shot glass, expressed his enthusiasm for Humm and Guidara's forthcoming restaurant. Despite global media attention on the new World Trade Center designs, he didn't have a thought to offer. Has he looked at the the new design?

"No, I haven't," Foster said at the groundbreaking.