Norman Foster tapped as new tower's designer

The famed British architect is named to design a block-long tower at 425 Park Ave. after an international competition. Construction will begin in 2015.

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The firm led by Pritzker Prize winning architect Lord Norman Foster has been selected to design the 650,000-square-foot office tower that will be built at 425 Park Ave. in the tony Plaza district, the project's developers announced Wednesday.

Lord Foster's company, Foster + Partners, was selected by a partnership developing the building that includes L&L Holding Co. and Lehman Brothers Holding Inc. after a competition involving several other prominent architecture firms including Rem Koolhaas' OMA and Zaha Hadid Architects. The partners had formed a committee of prominent design and real estate professionals to help advise it on the selection.

Construction of the building that will rise between East 55th and East 56th streets is slated to begin in 2015 and be completed by the end of 2017. Presently, there is a 650,000-square-foot building on the site that must be demolished. The new tower will be the first-full block office development on Park Avenue in midtown in nearly half a century, the owners of the site said in a statement.

"We are looking forward to beginning a process in which we translate Foster's brilliant concept into a modern tower which offers its inhabitants the most functional and environmentally sustainable work environment imaginable while also addressing the public realm in a way that hasn't been accomplished in many years," L&L Holding Chairman and CEO David Levinson said in statement.

Mr. Levinson also announced that he and Mr. Foster will make a presentation on the conceptual design during the Municipal Arts Society's third annual Summit for New York City on Oct. 19.

L&L owns more than 5 million square feet of office space in New York including 200 Fifth Ave. Mr. Foster's firm is best known in New York for designing the Hearst tower.