

L&L, Lehman Bros, Select Foster + Partners For 425 Park Revamp

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NEW YORK CITY—The long search is now over. Following a six-month selection process, a partnership of L&L Holding Co., the master leaseholder of 425 Park Ave., and Lehman Brothers Holdings has selected London-based architecture firm Foster + Partners to redesign the office building into a state-of-the-art skyscraper, the companies unveiled in a joint statement Wednesday morning. Upon completion, it will be the first new office tower on Park Avenue in more than 50 years.

Known for their work on the Hearst Tower in Midtown and the World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan, Foster + Partners will partner with Rogers, Stirk, Harbour + Partners (Lord Richard Rogers), OMA (Rem Koolhaas) and Zaha Hadid Architects to participate in the final conceptual design phase of the competition over the summer.

Later this month, L&L chairman and CEO David Levinson and Lord Foster will make a presentation on the conceptual design during the Municipal Art Society's third annual "Summit For New York City" on Oct. 19. The two-day summit, which begins on Oct. 18, will also feature an exhibit featuring the 425 Park Avenue design concepts that were presented by each of the four finalists in the competition. In total, 11 firms participated in the challenge.

In a statement, Levinson says: "There is no doubt that each group was fully capable of helping us realize our vision of a 425 Park Ave. tower that redefines the modern office environment while also respecting and enhancing the timeless allure of the Plaza District."

As the plan currently stands, Foster + Partners has proposed to raze the current structure and create a LEED- certified 650,000-square-foot tower featuring a tapered steel frame rising to meet three illuminated shear walls. The conceptual design also calls for a façade that allows for three gradated tiers of column-free floors. The new building will replace the current 559,763-square-foot tower spanning 55th and 56th Streets.

On discussing the redesign process, Lord Foster, chairman of Foster + Partners, envisions a new tower that anticipates changing needs in the workplace with large, open spaces that encompass flexible use. He says each of the three tiers – low, medium and high-rise – is defined by a landscaped terrace that would provide "excellent amenities" for tenants and offer panoramic views across Manhattan and Central Park.

"I have a personal connection with New York, which has been a source of inspiration since my time at Yale, when the new towers on Park Avenue and its neighborhoods were a magnet for every young architect," he says. "Seeing first-hand the works of Miles van der Rohe, Gordon Bunshaft, Eero Saarinen and Philip Johnson was tremendously exciting then – I am delighted to have this very special opportunity to design a contemporary tower to stand alongside them."

L&L anticipates that the demolition of the current building and construction will commence in 2015, with completion in 2017.