

Another Icon for New York's Skyline?

BY EMILY D'ALTERIO | OCTOBER 5, 2012 | ARCHITECTURE SOURCE

In a city as dense as New York, building tall is one of the few true ways for architects to have their projects stand out and make the most of the expensive and small building footprints on offer.

New York stands as one of the world's most notable skyscraper cities, with historic icons such as the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building giving the city its distinct skyline.

Acclaimed architectural firm Foster + Partners could add another icon to the cityscape with the development of a planned 687-foot office tower at 425 Park Avenue.

The skyscraper will be steel-framed and tapered, with three transparent walls rising over a three-tiered form. These three tiers will be at different heights, offering distinct views over the city that coincide with their specific functions.

According to Foster + Partners founder and chair Lord Norman Foster, the concept of adding an icon to the skyline was as much of a challenge as it was a great honour.

"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 neighbourhoods were a magnet for every young architect," he said. "Seeing first-hand the works of Mies 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".

The building will serve as office space for the partnership of L&L Holding Company and Lehman Brothers Holdings, Inc. (LBHI). Its interior design is expected to exemplify the best of modern workplace understanding with an emphasis on flexibility and collaboration.

"Our aim is to create an exceptional building, both of its time and timeless, as well as being respectful of this context – a tower that is for the City and for the people that will work in it, setting a new standard for office design and providing an enduring landmark that befits its world-famous location," Foster said.

The building is also targeting high green standards and is promoted as a sustainable building, though its sustainable features have yet to be revealed.

Even with a prime location, modern ideals and an equally modern aesthetic, however, can the building really achieve Foster's goal of standing out in a sea of such architectural greats, or will it become just another glass-facade building the likes of which many architects globally are shunning?