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## Zaha Hadid for Park Avenue? She and 10 Starchitects Compete to Design a \$750-Million Skyscraper



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425 Park Avenue, New York City  
by Kelly Chan  
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Mid-century modernism did wonders for New York's Park Avenue back in its heyday. Case in point: **Mies van der Rohe's** Seagram Building and the neighboring Lever House by **Skidmore, Owings & Merrill**. The two buildings were pioneers of high-end office design, leaving a trail of boxy facsimiles along Manhattan's ritzy boulevard. Few designs have really broken the mold since then, but now, half a century later, a not-so-little developer called **L&L Holding Co.** has come along, hoping to shake up the city skyline.

The site of 425 Park Avenue now awaits its fate as a star-studded line-up of prospective architects compete for the chance to helm the \$750 million project. **L&L Holding Co.** has tapped **Jean Nouvel**,

**Herzog & de Meuron, Foster & Partners, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Richard Meier, Renzo Piano** and others with high hopes to create a "bespoke skyscraper that will both complement Park Avenue's existing architectural treasures and make its own indelible mark in the world's most timeless office corridor," as described by **Columbia** director of the center for urban real estate **Vishaan Chakrabarti**, [according to the Wall Street Journal](#).

The current building is already occupied by a pristine office tower, and L&L have bold plans to knock down the bulk of it to construct a bigger, badder "crown jewel." Moreover, the plan to leave part of the existing building in place is to dodge finicky city zoning codes, which would have forced L&L to build a smaller tower had the existing building been completely razed.

It is clear that L&L have placed incredible faith in the appeal of the site as well as the appeal of name brand design, enough to expect that tenants will happily shell out \$100 or more per square foot. The plans exhibit architecture at its most aggressive, aiming to find a form that will turn dollar signs into even more dollar signs, or in more relevant terms, architecture of the 1%. Judging by the shortlist of architects, the aesthetic of Park Avenue's new skyscraper will make a similarly forceful statement, breaking through the uniformity of an avenue fossilized in the 1960s. Picture it now: a contorting sculpture churned out by Zaha Hadid Architects, resting atop a Duane Reade.

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by Kelly Chan, [Architecture & Design](#), [Architecture](#), [Architecture & Design](#), [Architecture](#)