

Made ⁱⁿManhattan

As One World Trade Centre opens for business, Jenny Southan explores the changing face of New York's Downtown and Midtown West districts

Almost 13 years since the September 11 attacks, the time has finally come for New York's Downtown district to rise from Ground Zero to mighty hero.

In a matter of months, Condé Nast will become the first company to move into the new US\$4 billion One World Trade Centre (onewtc.com), occupying 25 of its 104 floors. While the building was topped out in August 2012, the addition of its 124-metre spire completed its vital statistics in May last year – standing at 541 metres, it is not only taller than its predecessors, the Twin Towers, but any other skyscraper in the Western Hemisphere.

When I visited in March, the area around the base of One WTC (formerly dubbed the Freedom Tower and located at 285 Fulton Street) was still a high-security construction site so I was assigned an official guide, a hard hat and a high-vis jacket before being escorted across an expanse of debris to the entrance of the glass-and-steel structure.

Although the floors were covered in wooden boards, stepping into the vast, white marble lobby was impressive – light poured through long, slender

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windows cut into the lower section of the tower's bomb-proof concrete base, rising 57 metres. Apart from the 15-metre-high welcome hall, this portion of the building will not be occupied. When Condé Nast sets up its global HQ in November, it will take over the first livable portion of the building, from levels 20 to 44.

With 55 per cent of the tower leased before opening, the publisher's neighbours will include Vantone China Centre on levels 64 to 69, which will provide "a home for China in the city of influence". According to its website (chinacenter.com), it will be "a coveted venue for fine dining, corporate events, cultural activities, business, social opportunities and global dialogue", with a double-height lobby, offices, conference and exhibition space, film screenings, restaurants, a bar and a members' club.

Legends Hospitality Group will operate the observatory floors of 100 to 102 from next summer, while the federal government's General Services Administration will move its regional HQ for the US Army Corps of Engineers and Customs and Border Protection to floors 50-55 by the end of next year. Level 87 will be taken over by advertising agency Kids Creative, while Hugo Boss and tech company Percolate have reportedly expressed an interest too.

Every level offers panoramic views through floor-to-ceiling windows, and One WTC's eco-friendly blueprint is expected to earn it gold LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.

Designed by David M Childs, the building has been co-developed by real estate firm the Durst Organisation and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. When drawing up the plans, front of mind was strength and fortitude, not just in terms of the emotional import the building was going to have for New Yorkers but also structurally – there was much to be learnt from the way the previous World Trade Centre had been constructed, and tenants would need reassurance that the latest safety measures had been taken into account.

As well as the armoured base, which has concrete walls a metre thick clad in 2,000 panels of special shatterproof glass, One WTC has a super-strong central core that allows for column-free office space and protects the elevator shafts, sprinkler systems and stairways that run up and down the middle of the building. Inside, there are dedicated extra-wide staircases with their own air systems for firefighters, and 70

Right: The new One World Trade Centre in Downtown



lifts that are impenetrable to water and pressurised against smoke, and that will continue to function in the event of fire. I was told it is the safest building in the world and that, from now on, other new-build skyscrapers in the city will have similar safety features.

DOWNTOWN UPGRADE

Looking out of the windows on the south side, at the bottom you can see two dark square pools in the September 11 Memorial garden – waterfalls that plunge into the ground and mark the footprint of where the Twin Towers stood. Next door is the National 9/11 Memorial Museum, which opened in May, and adjacent to that are the hulking spines of the skeleton structure of Calatrava station. Set to open next year, it will be home to the new Port Authority Transit Hub (PATH), the most expensive of its kind in the world, at close to US\$4 billion – the same as One WTC itself.

Last autumn, a subterranean marble corridor (known as the West Concourse) linking Calatrava with One WTC was unveiled. When finished, the transport nerve centre will have 150 restaurants and shops (the Westfield Group is a partner) and service 250,000 commuters a day.

“Walking through, you really feel you’re in the future,” says Tara Stacom, vice-chairman of Cushman and Wakefield, property manager for One WTC. “A lot of the past is forgotten, and you get excited by the new aspects of what’s in Downtown.”

Nearby is the US\$1.4 billion Fulton Centre, which opened in June and sees the confluence of 11 subway lines that deliver 300,000 passengers a day. Then there is the 74-floor Four World Trade Centre on 150 Greenwich Street (to the south of One WTC), which opened last year and houses the City of New York and Port Authority.

“Now the area is coming back and, really, it’s been very long in

**ONE
WORLD
TRADE
CENTRE
IN
NUMBERS**

US\$4bn cost
541m height (with spire)
526m height of original WTC One (with antenna)
104 floors
103 floors in Empire State Building
100-102 observation deck levels
5 million visitors a year expected for observation deck
325,000 sqm office space
43,540 tonnes of structural steel used in construction
92,900 sqm glass cladding on exterior
70 lifts
60 seconds it takes to get from the ground to the top floor



coming,” says Nancy Ploeger, president of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce. Stacom agrees: “We started out jokingly saying ‘Downtown is the new Midtown’, but now it’s true. It’s where most companies want to be. The average age of buildings in Manhattan is 80 years, but most companies want new class-A office space with floor-to-ceiling glass, higher ceilings and no columns. Compared with new construction anywhere else in the city, it is significantly less expensive, too.”

Add to that various tax abatements and exemptions as incentives, and organisations have a compelling proposition to lease desk-space in the WTC complex. Stacom adds that quality of life is a factor. “People are gravitating towards the water and the green space,” she says. “The younger generation wants to know that companies are thinking about the environment, and Downtown typifies that more than Midtown, which is a lot more stone and concrete and cavernous avenues. Downtown is a new 24/7 community.”

Along with the likes of Starwood’s W Downtown, which opened in 2010 opposite the 9/11 Memorial, and the Conrad, which launched in 2012, another 18 or so hotels are in varying stages of development. These include the Aloft Manhattan Downtown and Four Points by Sheraton, both to open in September, and Four Seasons, Hilton, Residence Inn, Courtyard by Marriott and Indigo, all in 2016.

Patrick Horstmann, general manager of the W Downtown, says: “The luxury market continues to grow exponentially in New York. This can be seen not only in hotels opening with a higher ratio of suite offerings, but also in real estate, where the multimillion-dollar condo market is booming.”

No longer a soulless financial district, the area is also alive with tourists and migrating locals. Even on a Saturday night, when the streets look empty, you can find 21st-century speakeasies (above the China Chalet chinese restaurant, for example), full of hipsters from Brooklyn and the East Village.

“It’s become sort of a living, breathing, seven-day-a-week type of neighbourhood,” says Kevin Draper, owner, director and lead guide for NY Historical Tours. “And the key is, it’s not all commercial.”



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Among the numerous sky-high condos popping up will be Herzog and de Meuron’s striking 56 Leonard in Tribeca (it looks like a crooked tower of glass Jenga blocks). Set for completion in 2016, it comprises 145 luxury apartments, ten penthouses and a squashed steel orb sculpture by Anish Kapoor holding up one corner.

The progress has not been without its problems and hold ups, however. At 175 Greenwich Street (previously the site of the Marriott World Trade Centre hotel, destroyed on 9/11) are the first eight levels of Three WTC, but work recently rumbled to a halt amid funding problems and a lack of interest from potential tenants. At number 200, Two World Trade Centre has been designed by Foster and Partners to be the second-tallest of the WTC skyscrapers, but is yet to be built, as is the case with the 42-floor Five WTC on 130 Liberty Street.

WEST SIDE STORY

The regeneration isn’t restricted to Downtown. The trend for creating human-friendly living/working environments is taking shape throughout New York, but particularly in Midtown West, near the Hudson River, where real-estate firm Related Companies is planning the largest private project of its kind in the US.

Hudson Yards, as it will be known, (hudsonyardsnewyork.com) will consist of five office towers, a cultural centre, 5,000 apartments, 100 shops, 20 eateries, a hotel (Four Points by Sheraton Manhattan Hudson Yards, due in 2016) and 5.6 hectares of public space. The first phase is due to be finished by 2018.

The highlight will be the third section of the High Line Park, which will run through the base of one of its towers and is due to open by the end of the year. Stretching from Gansevoort Street in the Meatpacking District to West 30th, the first two elevated sections of the 1930s freight railway line were turned into a scenic walkway in 2009, with artworks, wild grasses and flowers and viewing spots. Almost five million people visit it

Clockwise from top left: September 11 Memorial garden; inside One WTC; Downtown skyline; Calatrava WTC transit hub



Left: 30 Hudson Yards from number 7 subway station
Right: Ten and 30 Hudson Yards

annually. Draper says: "The High Line has brought people to the neighbourhood. People realised what incredible views you have [from there] and, all of a sudden, they wanted to start living there, so the real estate developers are putting up as many buildings as they can alongside it."

"It's revitalised the entire neighbourhood, which is also connected to the waterfront. It's only a block away, so that opens up that whole west side – you have this mile and a half of Manhattan that was kind of a dead zone but because of the High Line, it's brought it back to life." Nearby is the Google campus in Chelsea, while the new Whitney art gallery opens next year by the High Line's southern terminus.

Also under way is the US\$30 million Hudson Park and Boulevard, the first phase of which – between 33rd and 36th streets – is due to be complete in December, with the second phase, from 36th to 42nd Street, to follow. Jessica Scaperotti, director of communications for Related Companies, says: "Once these projects are complete, you will have a new network of parks in Manhattan. You will be able to walk from Gansevoort Street to Times Square through green space."

Wedged between Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen, Hudson Yards will be spread over 11 hectares, with three-quarters of the site on top of the working railyard – a platform is currently being erected above it.

Scaperotti says: "These neighbourhoods are growing at five times the rate of the rest of Manhattan but in the middle you have train tracks. So what Hudson Yards is going to do is bridge together the West Side in a way that has never been done before. In Chelsea you have hundreds of galleries, and then there will be the Culture Shed in Hudson Yards at one end of the High Line, and the new Whitney at the other, so you are going to have this cultural Mecca."

Divided into two zones, there will be the Eastern Yard (phase one), which will be 80 per cent commercial, 20 per cent residential, and the Western Yard (phase two), which will be 80 per cent residential, 20 per cent commercial. The Culture Shed will open by 2018 in the former, on a public square that joins on to the Hudson Park and Boulevard, and will have an unusual design feature that allows it to be expanded.

Michael Samuelian, vice-president of Related Companies, explains: "The Culture Shed can be 'nested' or 'deployed' – it rolls out on wheels that are two metres high with walls that go down like guillotines, though more slowly, so it can be opened or closed and climate controlled. Normally it is nested, which means it allows for a plaza

'You'll be able to walk from Gansevoort Street to Times Square through green space'

that is open to the public, but when there is a concert, a 1,000-person fundraiser or a Jeff Koons exhibition, for example, that can't fit the usual area, you would deploy the Shed Hall in London's Tate Modern." Galleries will be able to host pop-up exhibitions, while New York's Fashion Week will move from the Lincoln Centre.

The five office towers are planned for completion by 2018, the first of which, Ten Hudson Yards, has been designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox and is due to open next year. Another, the 80-storey 30 Hudson Yards (2017-18), will house Time Warner (HBO and CNN will move their studios here) and feature the highest outdoor observation deck in New York City. It will also provide access to the new number 7 subway station – part of a US\$2.4 billion extension to the number 7 subway line, which currently terminates at Times Square, it will begin operations this autumn.

Nearby, at Ninth Avenue and 33rd Street, another mixed-use project broke ground in 2012. Continuing the trend, the US\$4.5 billion Manhattan West project (manhattanwestnyc.com) will be built over the train tracks that connect to Penn station, on top of which will be two office towers, one apartment block and a plaza by 2020.

Samuelian says: "The West Side, which was traditionally our manufacturing hub, is where it's at – 20-25 years ago I remember derelict piers falling into the river but now it's chock-a-block with development."

Draper has noticed change rippling through New York as a whole: "It's a renaissance. It was like the Dark Ages in the 1970s, but now it's being reborn – the subways are cleaner, the parks are nicer and pedestrian zones are being created." For New Yorkers, it's onwards and upwards. ■

FACT FILE

- Visit nycgo.com/uk
- The Quin thequinhotel.com
- The Mark themarkhotel.com
- W Downtown wnewyorkdowntown.com
- For reviews visit business traveller.com/tried-and-tested



HUDSON YARDS IN NUMBERS

The largest private real-estate project in US history

US\$20bn
cost

23,000
construction jobs created

5
office towers

1.5 million sqm
commercial and residential space

5,000
residences

100
shops

20
restaurants

11.3 hectares
footprint of site

5.6 hectares
open public space

24 million
visitors a year expected

2018
completion date for phase one

Late 2014
opening of number 7 subway extension and High Line phase three