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Foster, SOM and WXY reveal radical Grand Central visions

19 October, 2012 | By [Merlin Fulcher](#)

A giant floating skyway features among proposals by Foster and Partners, SOM and WXY to transform New York's Grand Central Terminal and the East Midtown neighbourhood

The Municipal Art Society (MAS) of New York unveiled the visions this week to coincide with celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the world-famous Beaux Arts transport complex.

The three practices were asked to create a vision for the future of the public areas around the 19 hectare terminal and in the city's surrounding East Midtown district. The project is intended to influence the scheduled rezoning of the area.

SOM's scheme created a rising 'panoramic ring' above the station. The vision also proposed creating new corridors through existing buildings to increase pedestrian circulation and transforming Vanderbilt Avenue and a viaduct into new public spaces.

SOM design partner Roger Duffy said: 'Throughout New York City's history significant urban growth has been matched by grand civic responses. The 1811 Commissioner's Plan, the creation of Central Park, zoning regulations in 1916 and 1961, and Grand Central Terminal itself have all resulted from this fundamental relationship.'



SOM's vision to transform New York's Grand Central Terminal and the East Midtown neighbourhood

'MAS's call to focus on the public spaces in and around East Midtown is an opportunity to propose a rebalancing of this equation, increasing the quantity and quality of public space as the city contemplates significant densification in the area.'

Foster and Partners proposed a series of small interventions to improve street-level circulation and flow. Aiming to create

breathing space around Grand Central, the vision focussed on redesigning the surrounding buildings so they respond to a public space strategy.

Norman Foster said: 'The Municipal Art Society's call to study the Next 100 years of Grand Central Terminal in the wider context of the city and its public realm represents an important and welcome debate that will help shape the future form of the city.'

'The quality of a city's public realm reflects the level of civic pride and has a direct impact on the quality of everyday life. With the advent of the Long Island Rail Road East Side Access, along with the plan to re-zone the district, there has never been a better opportunity to tackle the issues of public access and mobility around one of the greatest rail terminals in the World.'

New York-based WXY focussed on creating new public spaces around the base of Walter Gropius's MetLife building and creating seamless access from Vanderbilt Avenue to the tracks below.



WXY's vision to transform New York's Grand Central Terminal and the East Midtown neighbourhood

Claire Weisz, principal at WXY, said: 'New zoning rules should trigger real transportation links to public space. One way is to harness the untapped potential of Grand Central's edges. The plan for Midtown's near future needs to make the Grand Central neighborhood a place people enjoy being in not just running through.'

MAS president Vin Cipolla said: 'There is perhaps no building more important in New York City than Grand Central. It is the anchor of a major commercial business district, a critical piece of infrastructure, and one of our most important urban transportation hubs. It is also one of the world's great public spaces.'

He added: 'As the City considers a new re-zoning plan that will help New York City keep pace with other global capitals, there are critical issues that need to be at the core of this new, bold, vision for Midtown.'

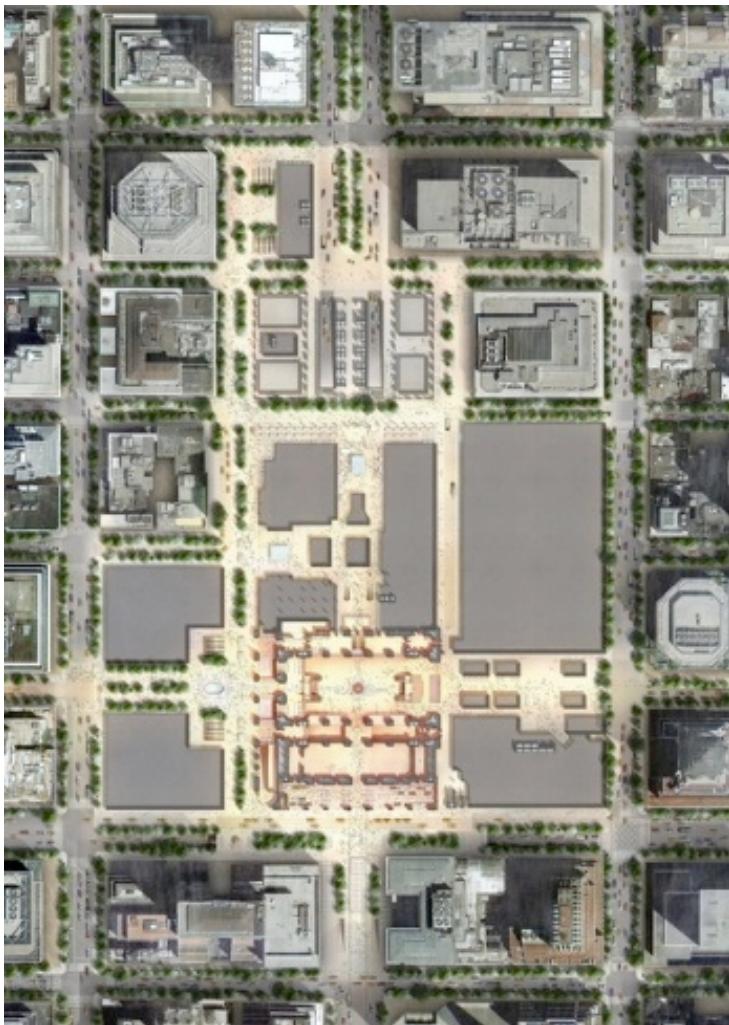
'First, the public experience must be at the center of the conversation — not the size of buildings. As Midtown evolves, we also must ensure that we protect the buildings that are essential to our history and find ways of updating and adapting existing buildings.'

'Finally, any new development needs to meet the standards set by some of the great buildings in this area. The stunning work we unveiled today – produced by Foster, SOM & WXY – makes clear that there is much that can and should be done to re-invigorate Midtown.'

Foster and Partners' vision to transform New York's Grand Central Terminal and the East Midtown neighbourhood

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