

October 30, 2017

550 Madison

Snøhetta has been commissioned to reimagine the 1980's postmodern tower located at 550 Madison Avenue. The renovation is the first major project to be announced for New York City's East Midtown since its revitalization plan was approved earlier this year. While the recognizable top of the tower will remain a fixture of the New York City skyline as it has since its completion in 1984, the new design will transform the base into an inviting street front, extending the lively activity of Madison Avenue further south to 55th Street. Moreover, the adjacent public space will nearly double in size to create a lush outdoor garden for the public's enjoyment. Snøhetta's design will update the building with state-of-art systems and breathe new life into the building's public, retail and office spaces for the contemporary needs of one of the world's most recognized avenues.

Completed in 1984, 550 Madison, formerly known as the AT&T Building and then the Sony Building, was originally designed by Philip Johnson for single-tenant occupancy, serving as the eponymous world headquarters for its corporate owners. Since the departure of the Sony Corporation more than a year-and-a-half ago, its office floors have sat vacant. The building's redesign modernizes interior spaces to meet the contemporary needs of a variety of office tenants and adds high-quality amenities, world-class retail and restaurants. The renewed 550 Madison aspires to be a leader for commercial tower renovations in the future, targeting LEED Gold for sustainability, WELL-certification for healthy materials and well-being, and WIRED-certification for digital infrastructure. It will employ a Dedicated Outdoor Air Ventilation System (DOAS), ensuring tenants have access to a continuous supply of clean fresh air, while consuming less energy than typical VAV mechanical ventilation systems. In leading the transformation of East Midtown for the rapid changes of the contemporary workforce, 550 Madison will ensure the area remains a thriving, world-class business district.

Snøhetta's design approach stitches the life of the building back into the street. Since 550 Madison was first completed, its fortress-like base created an uninviting street front, which was then further compromised by a series of ground-floor renovations that effectively closed the building off from its surroundings. With the updated design, the stone façade will be partially replaced at eye level by an undulating glass curtainwall. From the street, the reconceived façade dramatically highlights the multi-story arched entry while revealing the craftsmanship of the building's existing steel structure. Scalloped glass references the sculpted forms of fluted stone columns, re-interpreting the building's monumentality while creating a lively and identifiable public face for passersby. With this increased transparency, the activity within the lobby, atrium, and first 2 levels of the building will become part of the vibrant energy of the street.

As part of the renovation, 550 Madison's public space will be converted to an outdoor garden, providing a verdant landscape with water features and trees as a respite from the dense urban fabric of Manhattan. The existing mid-block passageway at the rear of the tower connecting 55th and 56th Street will be transformed into a serene public space. By removing neighboring annex building, the design will allow access to open air and daylight while nearly doubling the amount of publicly accessible space. The revitalized public garden makes itself visible from the densely-built streetscape with entrances anchored by vegetation, as well as through the reconfigured building lobby as a splash of color that catches the eye.

The garden encourages a variety of experiences: to meet over lunch and socialize, to find a moment of peace besides the water feature, or to experience a tactile connection to nature. A sensitively curated planting palette will celebrate the dynamic seasonality of the Northeastern climate, transformed over the course of the year by colorful flowering trees and blubs in spring, warm autumnal colors, and the stark elegance of cypresses and evergreens in winter. These new plantings will allow smaller species of birds and butterflies to flourish in their new environment, a unique urban habitat. The lush outdoor garden will be the largest within a 5-minute walking radius of the building, providing a respite from the verticality of Midtown, awakening people to their surroundings, and allowing them to linger and take pleasure in a part of the city that they typically rush through.

The re-imagined 550 Madison reflects how we work and live in New York today. The design sensitively transforms a sculpturally monumental building and celebrates the experience of the building where it meets the street. By updating this inward-looking tower for the 21st century, the redesign will foster a more vibrant, dynamic relationship between the building, the city, and the people who inhabit it.

550 Madison Facts

Floor Plate Area: 24,000-25,000 RSF

Height: 647 feet

Overall Square Footage: 850,000 RSF

Notable Targets:

Sustainability: LEED Gold

Health and Well-being: WELL-certified

Digital Infrastructure: WIRED-certified

Air Quality: Dedicated Outdoor Air Ventilation System (DOAS) to continuously supply clean, fresh air to the interior

More information at 550Madison.com.

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Team

About Snøhetta

For nearly 30 years, Snøhetta has designed some of the world's most notable public and cultural projects. Snøhetta kick-started its career in 1989 with the competition-winning entry for the new library of Alexandria, Egypt. This was later followed by the commission for the Norwegian National Opera in Oslo, the National September 11 Memorial Museum Pavilion at the World Trade Center in New York City, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Expansion in California, among many others. Since its inception, the practice has maintained its original trans-disciplinary approach, integrating architectural, landscape, interior and brand design in all of its projects.

Snøhetta is currently working on a number of projects internationally, including The French Laundry Kitchen Expansion and Garden Renovation in Yountville, California, the Le Monde Headquarters in Paris, the Cornell University Executive Education Center and Hotel in New York, two public libraries in New York City, one in Far Rockaway, Queens and one in the Bronx, and the design for Norway's new banknotes which went into circulation in 2017. Recently completed works include the redesign of the public space in Times Square, the Lascaux IV Caves Museum in Montignac, France, and the expansion to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Among its many recognitions, Snøhetta received the World Architecture Award for the Biblioteca Alexandrina and the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, and the Aga Kahn Prize for Architecture for the Alexandria Library. Since its completion in 2008, the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet has also garnered the Mies van der Rohe European Union Prize for Architecture and the EDRA (Environmental Design Research Association) Great Places Award, as well as the European Prize for Urban Public Space, The International Architecture Award and The Global Award for Sustainable Architecture in 2010. In 2016, Snøhetta was named the Wall Street Journal's Architecture Innovator of the Year.

About Olayan

Founded in 1947, The Olayan Group is a private, multinational enterprise with an actively managed portfolio of international investments and diverse commercial and industrial operations in the Middle East. The Group's main offices are in Athens, London, Riyadh and New York, where the Group has had a continuous presence for more than 45 years. Investing both directly and in partnership with leading developers, the Group has a diverse real estate portfolio that includes commercial, residential, and mixed-use properties. Among them are a number of well-known trophy assets: the Paris Portfolio of historic buildings in that city's prestigious 8th Arrondissement, the Knightsbridge Estate in central London, and the historic Ritz Hotel of Madrid.

About Chelsfield

As a leading visionary property developer, active investor and asset manager, Chelsfield has established a reputation for their ability to unlock the outstanding potential behind each of their commercial, residential, hotel and leisure projects. Since 1986, they have inspired some of the most influential development and investment projects in London and around the world, from Paris to New York and now Hong Kong to Tokyo.

With a strong strategic approach to new markets and opportunities, and with \$9.4bn of transactions since 2005, Chelsfield consistently delivers market-leading returns for their investors, taking pride in building long term relationships with both partners and investors, and in partnering with the best in class for each project they are involved in.