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Hudson Yards: A New (Far) West Side Story



Edward Caruso for The New York Times

The makeover of the Far West Side has been taking shape for so long, anticipating its completion can feel like waiting for Godot, as if the moment will never arrive. More than a decade ago, the city rezoned much of a vast industrial tract here to allow for a more typical urban neighborhood. Yet it will still be years before many major developments open their doors.

But a focus on slow-moving megaprojects like Hudson Yards, from the Related Companies and the Oxford Properties Group, and Manhattan West, from Brookfield Property Partners, which are developing high-rise towers, can obscure progress elsewhere.

Continuing a slow-and-steady trend, smaller apartment buildings are popping up throughout the neighborhood of Hudson Yards, which has the same name as the Related project but a much bigger footprint, sweeping west of Eighth Avenue, roughly from West

30th to 42nd Streets. Rentals and condos are also rising in next-door West Chelsea, long considered a separate enclave, though boundaries seem increasingly blurred.

“In the end, the area is definitely living up to its promise,” said Cary Tamarkin, the founding principal of the Tamarkin Company, a developer that began sales of 550 West 29th Street, a 19-unit condo near 11th Avenue last week.

“I may not always be sure of how some things are going to turn out, what they will become,” Mr. Tamarkin said of his surroundings. “But it is really exciting to be around.”

Emerging from the 34th Street-Hudson Yards station, the two-year-old subway stop on the No. 7 line, one is immediately struck by the scope of what developers hope to do. In almost every direction is an active construction site. “Sidewalk closed” signs turn walkways into mazes. And clangs, beeps and rumbles contribute to near-constant noise.

Away from that core area, all is busy as well. At West 33rd and Ninth Avenue, where the Cheyenne Diner stood for decades before trucks carted off its chrome walls in 2008, a seven-story, 12-unit rental has taken root. Developed by George Papaioannou, who owned the restaurant, the gray-brick building, at 411 Ninth Avenue, will offer mostly one- and two-bedroom units, plus a roof deck and bike room, when it opens this winter, he said. Rents have not yet been set.

“It’s hard to imagine all these tall buildings filling up,” he said of the neighborhood’s high-rises, with a note of skepticism. Mr. Papaioannou, who also owns the Skylight Diner around the corner, on West 34th Street, remembers when the area was “seedy” at night, and hardly a destination. “But the neighborhood is in transition,” he said.

Loftier structures are going up, too, like Henry Hall, a 33-story, 225-unit rental from Imperial Companies and Shorenstein Properties at 515 West 38th Street that opened this spring. It will have several bars off the lobby, which could give the area’s nightlife a jolt. Nearby is 515 West 36th Street, a 39-story rental tower from Lalezarian Properties, designed by Ismael Leyva Architects, between Tenth and 11th Avenues. The building will have 251 apartments, according to building permits, plus stores at the base.

Lalezarian has been active in the area. Welcoming tenants this spring was the company’s 507 West Chelsea, an interconnected three-building rental at 507 West 28th Street that has 375 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments. With an indoor pool, a lounge with a landscaped wall, and a roof deck, No. 507 effectively straddles the High Line, the area’s enormously popular park, in that it offers apartments on both sides of the park and is connected underneath it.

Studios start at about \$3,500 a month, though two free months of rent is being offered as a concession, said Andrew Barrocas, the chief executive officer of the brokerage MNS, which is handling leasing. Although some nearby blocks might feel like never-ending work zones, Mr. Barrocas said, “everything that is not completed is in the works.”

Condos, while rarer, are also creeping in, although the market-wide slowdown in high-end sales seems to be affecting even this trendy neighborhood.

Sales at Soori High Line, a 31-unit building at 522 West 29th Street with swimming pools in about half of its apartments, are currently taking a breather while a model unit is prepared and some prices are adjusted, and will resume in earnest next month, said Toni Haber, an associate broker with Compass. “Everything has been a little slow,” she added. The previous average sale price at the condo was about \$3,700 a square foot, according to StreetEasy.

And a 15-unit condo across the street, at 515 West 29th Street, is set to open next year, said Soo K. Chan, the founding principal of SCDA Architects. Mr. Chan designed both Soori High Line and this building, next to the High Line. He was previously an investor at 515 West 29th Street, though that is no longer the case, Mr. Chan said; its developer is Forum Absolute Capital Partners.

Further along is 520 West 28th Street, a 39-unit condo developed by the Related Companies and designed by Zaha Hadid, the Pritzker Prize-winning architect who died last year. The curvaceous building, where sale prices average about \$3,200 a square foot, according to StreetEasy, is about 40 percent sold since 2016, a Related spokeswoman said, and residents started moving in earlier this month.

And then there is Mr. Tamarkin’s West 29th Street condo, an industrial-style brick edifice with large casement windows. It offers three- and four-bedroom units, including a dozen duplexes, at an average list price of \$2,900 a square foot, he said.

While the megaprojects may not be coming together as quickly as their smaller counterparts, they have added apartments to the area as well. Included in Manhattan West, the multi-block and mostly commercial complex that Brookfield is working on, is a spire called the Eugene, with 844 rental units. The glittery tower, at 435 West 31st Street, has leased about half its market-rate units since the spring, a Brookfield spokesman said.

But what might excite current residents, in an area where shops can seem sorely lacking, is that Brookfield has leased retail space at the Eugene to an outpost of Bluestone Lane, the high-end Australian coffee shop, which starts pouring cappuccinos this month. A Whole Foods grocery store is also planned for Manhattan West, but not until 2020, the spokesman said.

Likewise, at the mini-city that Related and Oxford is developing — much of it built on a platform atop railroad beds — the early focus has been on office properties, but there will also be residences, like 15 Hudson Yards, a 67-story, 391-unit condo. In a year, about 40 percent of its 285 market-rate units have sold, the Related spokeswoman said. Move-ins will happen in 2019.

Related is playing a rental card as well. This summer, the company, along with Abington Properties, welcomed One Hudson Yards, a 178-unit building where one-bedrooms average \$4,500 a month.

Those hungry for fancy restaurants may have to wait. Construction continues on a massive shopping center and restaurant complex from Related along Tenth Avenue, between much of the area that spans West 30th to West 33rd Streets. It won't start serving till 2019, but a smaller, 35,000-square-foot food hall with a Spanish theme is expected to open next year under the High Line, along West 30th Street, with the chef Jose Andres.

Generally packed with tourists, the High Line may never really be an escape for residents. But the Hudson Park and Boulevard, a planned six-block ribbon of greenery between 10th and 11th Avenues, could offer more of a respite. Only three blocks between West 33rd and West 36th Streets are now open, and they can have a raw, deserted feel. A vacant snack bar near West 36th Street has bars over its windows, and benches near it are frequently empty.

The closed streets nearby might explain why the park is overlooked. If Boulevard expands, it won't be without growing pains, said Steven Seruya, whose classic-car business on West 36th Street is in the path of the would-be park. "I loved it in the 1990s," said Mr. Seruya, who moved in then. "Back then, nobody wanted to be here."