

The Exterior of 540West



"THE LIST OF DEVELOPERS WHO ARE ACTIVELY DEVELOPING OR ARE IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING STAGES IN HELL'S KITCHEN IS A WHO'S WHO IN THE DEVELOPMENT WORLD." — STEPHEN MCARDLE

MIDTOWN WEST

YOU'RE NOT IN HELL'S KITCHEN ANYMORE

Text by Michael Ewing

Bound by 34th Street and 59th Streets, and running west from Fifth Avenue to the Hudson River, Midtown West has attracted developers and visionaries set on transforming its real estate and cultural landscape. Otherwise known as the grittier-sounding Hell's Kitchen, the area historically offered little more than warehouses and parking lots, and limited its real estate capacity to buildings of six stories or less. Immigrants, mainly of Irish descent,

populated the area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and were later displaced in the 1950s and 1960s by actors and artists who were drawn to the area for its proximity to Broadway shows and dance theaters. Recent endeavors are set on building upon the area's historic and cultural past to add a new dimension to the Manhattan real estate market.

Transformation

Several notable public and private ventures have taken shape over the recent years and laid the foundation for future development. "[The] neighborhood is anchored to the south by the redevelopment of the Hudson Yards and the extension of the 7 subway line along 42nd Street," notes **Stephen McArdle**, an associate broker at Halstead Property Development Marketing and project manager of 540West at 540 West 49th Street.

"The Highline is slowly making its way toward the Javits Center from the south," adds **Tom Stuart**, an associate broker at BOND. Some high-end retailers and eateries have started



Gotham West Market

to open in the area. "There has been a resurgence of upscale restaurants in the area such as Quality Meats and Quality Italian," adds **Michele Portnof** of Charles Rutenberg Realty. Italian fashion house Prada has also been drawn to the area.

"I feel that Hell's Kitchen is the soul of New York, a place where mom-and-pop shops still exist and artistic flair can be felt," adds **Vickey Barron**, a broker at Douglas Elliman and director of sales for 425 West 50th Street. "This is attracting some of the buyers from the West Village and Chelsea, as well as other parts of New York."

Although there have been considerable changes to the landscape, much of the character of Hell's Kitchen will remain in place by way of zoning limitations and rules.

"The Clinton Special Zoning District, which limits development heights and scale, will keep the neighborhood's historic character intact," explains McArdle. "The charm of the old New York feel, blended with a modern, vibrant movement in food, fashion and performing arts, makes Hell's Kitchen the dynamic community it is today."

Bringing All to Hudson Yards

"The development of Hudson Yards brought much more than residential development to the area," notes **Ariel Tavivian**, co-founder of the Tavivian Sporn Team at Douglas Elliman. "There are [now] tons of office and retail space, as well as parks and schools, which were very much needed."

In 2005, the New York City Department of City Planning and the MTA laid down the guidelines for the Hudson Yards development, rezoning nearly 60 blocks to Class A office space, housing units, hotels and retail space. The air rights were leased to Related Companies and Oxford Properties, two developers that are heading the development.

Set to span over a dozen skyscrapers, the project is broken down into two phases: the Eastern Rail Yard and the Western Rail Yard. The eastern space spans from 10th to 11th Avenue between West 30th and West 33rd Streets, and the western space moves further out, stretching from 11th to 12th Avenue. In total, there will be over 13,000,000 square feet

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split between 6,750,000 square feet of office space, 5,000,000 square feet of residential, 1,150,000 square feet of retail, 220,000 square feet of hotel, 120,000 square feet for school and a 100,000-square-foot cultural center. The first tower is set to be completed in 2015, in which retailer Coach will anchor a few hundred thousand square feet for its corporate headquarters.

Luxury Along 11th Avenue

"Gotham built the New Gotham in 1998, when the neighborhood was very different," notes **Melissa Pianko**, executive vice president of development at Gotham Organization. "There were almost no luxury doorman buildings and there were limited restaurants. Today, it is a totally different story—10th Avenue is lined with great places to eat and drink [and] there have been more than 15,000 luxury residential units developed."

Pianko notes that opening Gotham West, a 550-unit development at 550 West 45th Street, transformed the entire city block between 44th and 45th Streets east of 11th Avenue. The building offers apartments that range from studios to three-bedrooms with prices starting at \$2,750 for an alcove studio. One-bedrooms start around \$3,375, two-bedrooms upward of \$5,400 and three-bedrooms from \$8,600.

"With the opening of Gotham West Market this fall, we are going [to create] a day and night market featuring eight artisanal restaurants," she adds. Restaurants that have signed include El Colmado, The Cannibal, Ivan Ramen Slurp Shop, and The Brooklyn Kitchen. The restaurant group behind downtown's Saxon + Parole, AvroKO, will anchor the space with Genuine Roadside, its latest restaurant serving classic American roadside fare.

"[Gotham West] is a prime example of a smart amenities package combined with ground-floor retail that serves residents," says **Sid Whelan** of the Whelan Grayson Group at CORE.

Never Enough Luxury

"The area is often seen as the 'pulse' of New York," says **Jackie Urgo**, president at The Marketing Directors, noting recent developments including Strata at Mercedes House. Strata at Mercedes House, located at 550 West 54th Street, is led by Two Trees Management, who pulled in **Enrique Norten** to design a spiraling 32-story development. The upper 11 floors, known as the Strata, has little availability with rentals upward of \$4,000 for a one-bedroom and nearly \$8,000 for a three-bedroom.

JDS Development Group and Property Markets Group are also entering the market with the renovation of a former Verizon tower at 435 West 50th Street to create about 55 units across 100,000 square feet of space from the 10th to 17th floor, slated to open in 2014.

Fortis Property Group and Wonder Works Construction Corp. are marketing 540West at 540 West 49th Street. Each of the two towers is set to span seven stories and offer loft-like and multi-level residences, culminating into 114 units in total.

Unlike the other developments in the area, 540West is not a rental. Prices start in the upper \$700,000 and lower \$800,000 range for studios, with one-bedrooms pushing over \$1 million and 1,150-square-foot penthouses breaking \$2 million.

"The list of developers who are actively developing or are in development planning stages in Hell's Kitchen is a Who's Who in the development world," says McArdle. "Fortis Property Group and Wonder Works Construction are bringing 540West to life. Industry leaders have targeted this area for development." ■