

RAL Companies & Affiliates' Josh Wein at the construction site of what will one day be the new office building Zero Irving.
Stefano Giovannini



LOIS WEISS

REAL ESTATE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Inside NYC's new high-tech, COVID-19-proof office towers

By [Lois Weiss](#)

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COVID-19 may have shocked the city's commercial market but that **hasn't stopped developers** from doing what they do. In fact, a bevy of newly constructed and redeveloped towers are poised to hit the market in Manhattan.

Industry experts told The Post that it will be those new buildings, **designed with cutting-edge tech and with future pandemics** in mind, that will have the greatest advantage on the market.

"There is no question the buildings provisioned for the 21st century-plus are going to be in a better position to cash in on the leasing opportunities ahead," said David Goldstein, vice chairman of real estate services provider Savills. "It could be an

older building reimagined, or a new one under construction or in planning stages.”

Such **new office buildings and redevelopments** include among others, One Madison Ave., 561 Greenwich St., Zero Irving, 799 Broadway, 106 W. 56th St., the Terminal Warehouse at 261 11th Ave. in Chelsea and the nearby 610 W. 26th St. Meanwhile, the GM Building at 767 Fifth Ave. is getting a new amenity center.

“Property owners want to offer a unique proposition and promise [to tenants] that this is like no other property,” said strategic design expert Thomas Vecchione of architecture firm Vocon. “[Business owners] need a destination and a reason to be in New York and bring people together in an office.”

Other COVID-19-inspired tweaks will include larger stairwells, individual washrooms, numerous outdoor terraces, floor-to-ceiling windows and larger elevators.



561 Greenwich

Hines

In Hudson Square, 561 Greenwich St. is being combined with the adjacent 345 Hudson St. to create larger floor plates as floors become available. Tommy Craig, senior managing director of Hines — which is part of the ownership group including Trinity Church Wall Street and Norges Bank Real Estate Management on land that was owned by Trinity — and 561 Greenwich’s development manager, said the pandemic prompted their team to start “circling back” to items like the elevator banks that are now being redesigned to enable better social distancing.

The 250,000-square-foot concrete building, designed by Rick Cook of CookFox, will also utilize a hydronic air heat pump — which uses water for heating and cooling — to reduce carbon emissions by 50 percent. The project is expected to open in the fourth quarter of 2022.

“No fossil fuel or natural gas is used,” Craig said.

Another new project, Zero Irving, located on East 14th Street between Third Avenue and Union Square East on the site of a former PC Richards, is rising on city land.

Developed by RAL Companies, it is designed by architect Davis Brody Bond to host a tech hub and learning center, an appeal to tech-savvy tenants with an “ecosystem” that will “foster growth, flexibility and productivity.” It’s due to open in the first half of 2021.





The iconic GM Building at 767 Fifth Ave. is getting a slick new amenity center.

CBRE

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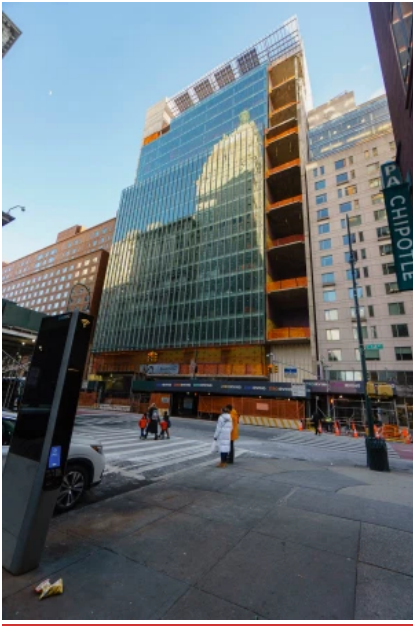
A digital skills training center and tech accelerator in the lower portion, dubbed “The Tech Hub at Zero Irving,” will occupy the second through seventh floors.

Floors eight through 21 are being pitched to companies that could help teach the tech courses (if desired) and employ some of those that are trained below. Zero Irving also has two separate lobbies to reduce congregation at the elevator banks.

According to Josh Wein, managing director of finance at RAL Companies & Affiliates, there will be a touchless experience coming into the rotunda with personal phone apps providing the keys to the elevators.

Additionally, every floor includes an “isolated VRF [variable refrigerant flow] system” so no air is circulated with other floors. Tenants can upgrade to the best-of-their-class MERV filters or add a bipolar ionization system themselves.





Zero Irving's construction site in Union Square.

Stefano Giovannini

The asking rents are in the “low triple digits: and so far, they are ‘holding steady;’ ” Wein said. Its 6,300-square-foot, tenant-only rooftop Sky Lounge has “cool lighting” and panoramic views. There are also private terraces on the 21st and 15th floors and double-height cubes along the west end of the building that will glow with colored LED lights and enhance the views along Irving Place, which terminates on the other side of East 14th Street.

Wein expects more biking to work than in pre-COVID days, so along with extra bike parking there are showers at the fitness center, which has windows looking out to a courtyard.

Public market curator Urbanspace has been tapped to run a food court and is lining up vendors.

“It is a well-conceived project notwithstanding a tough environment for lease-up because they put a very sophisticated offering out there,” said Goldstein.





Columbia Property Trust's upcoming tower at 799 Broadway at East 11th Street overlooks historic Grace Church.
Binyan Studios

Nelson Mills of Columbia Property Trust (CPT) calls the upcoming 799 Broadway at East 11th Street “a bright spot for us.” The construction of the 182,000-square-foot boutique property topped out over the summer and now the curtain wall, elevators and other systems are being installed for delivery later this summer.

“It’s a special property in a great location built with modern construction and integrated indoor-outdoor space, which is more important now,” Mills said.



The Six, at 106 W. 56 St., is a new 87,000-square-foot office project.
Savanna



The coronavirus sent them back to the drawing board with Chicago-headquartered architects Perkins&Will to add touchless doors throughout the building, destination elevators and an upgrade of the air filtration system.

“It will separate us further from the competition,” Craig added as discussions are ongoing with “well-known tech type” names. Neighbors include Facebook at 770 Broadway, IBM at 51 Astor Place and Netflix’s new 100,000-square-foot office in the renovation of 888 Broadway. It is also just few blocks from Union Square.

“The buildings don’t come cheap but there is a relative scarcity of high-end, small-scale new development,” said Goldstein. “It’s very sophisticated and will be well-positioned to compete.”

The Six at 106 W. 56th St. is a new boutique office project with 87,000 square feet. Its broker, Peter Turchin, vice chairman of CBRE, said the 4,000-square-foot floorplates will enable smaller firms to have offices in a newly constructed building — it topped out in 2019. It is expected to attract family offices and finance firms.



One Madison Ave. spans an entire block along East 23rd Street.

SL Green

Hines is also overseeing the redevelopment of One Madison Ave., a “groundscaper” as Craig called the large and currently low-rise building that stretches the entire block along East 23rd Street between Lexington and Madison avenues.

Being redeveloped by SL Green Realty Corp., the National Pension Service of Korea and Hines, the addition of a new glass tower will pump it to 1.4 million square feet and offer 57,000 square feet of outdoor terraces across from Madison Square Park. It will open in 2023.

The building will also have a dedicated outdoor air system HVAC unit that brings in 100 percent outside air for tenants, an 800-person event space, a 9,000-square-foot club-style tenant lounge and a full-service fitness center. The building is targeting both WELL and LEED-Gold certification.

At the groundbreaking in November, Mayor de Blasio praised its eco-friendly design.

“SL Green and all the partners in this project are taking that idea and bringing it to life and proving that we can do something different and this city can be in the forefront of stopping global warming,” de Blasio said. “They had a strong foundation to build on but they believed that they could reach greater heights. There is your metaphor for New York City. We have a strong foundation to build on.”



The Terminal Warehouse at 261 11th Ave. at West 28th Street, is still in pre-development planning and getting approvals.



There are plans to renovate the Terminal Warehouse with retail shops and a central courtyard.

CookFox Architects

Here, a partnership of Columbia Property Trust, L&L Holding plus JPMorgan Chase and CalSTRS pension fund will reinvent the building into a tech campus. Architects CookFox calls it a “high-performance, biophilic workplace.”

CPT’s Mills said it will be a combination of vintage and new. Sitting next to the West Side Highway and overlooking the Hudson River, it will have new glassed-in office space with substantial retail at the base. The 11th Avenue side will be brick and beam.

“The smart money is on companies who can repurpose and create an exciting communal space that people want to come to, and that will be the draw that gets them back in the office.”

- David Goldstein, vice chairman of Savills

The Terminal’s former Tunnel nightclub area has old train tracks that ran completely through the building to bring goods to awaiting barges and will become what CookFox calls the “beating heart” of the renovation that will include retail shops and a planted center courtyard when it opens in 2023.



Columbia is also redeveloping 250 Church St. and is rebranding 101 Franklin with a new roof deck.

“It is a good location and good bones,” Mills said. “We pressed pause for a few months and want to build the right thing.”

And in Times Square, TSX will become a mixed-use project with retail, offices and the historic Palace Theater in a 550,000-square-foot, \$2.5 billion 46-story tower currently under construction at 1568 Broadway. It’s slated to open in 2022 — possibly with a casino.

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“The smart money is on companies who can repurpose and create an exciting communal space that people want to come to, and that will be the draw that gets them back in the office,” said Goldstein.

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