



## **Mayor Bloomberg breaks ground on new home for Whitney Museum; LEED building designed by Piano, with Cooper, Robertson & Partners**

June 13, 2011 - Front Section

Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the Whitney Museum of American Art broke ground on a new home for the museum on Gansevoort St. in the Meatpacking District. The \$720 million building and endowment campaign caps a decades-long effort by the Whitney Museum to expand, given the space constraints at its current location on Madison Ave. The new nine-floor, 200,000 s/f building, designed by architect Renzo Piano, will be built on former city-owned property at the southern entrance to the High Line and is scheduled to open in 2015.

Bloomberg was joined at the ground breaking ceremony by first deputy mayor Patricia Harris, deputy mayor for Economic Development Robert Steel, city council speaker Christine Quinn, borough president Scott Stringer, cultural affairs commissioner Kate Levin, N.Y.C. Economic Development Corp. president Seth Pinsky, planning commissioner Amanda Burden, Parks & Recreation commissioner Adrian Benepe, Whitney Museum board of trustees co-chairs Robert Hurst and Brooke Garber Neidich, board president Neil Bluhm and director Adam Weinberg, architect Renzo Piano, and Flora Miller Biddle, the granddaughter of Whitney Museum founder Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney.

"The new Whitney Museum will be New York City's newest world-class cultural destination in one of the City's most dynamic and distinctive locations," said Bloomberg. "Positioned at the foot of the High Line in the Meatpacking District, the museum will strengthen the ongoing revitalization of an area that is fast-becoming one of the most vibrant in New York City. New Yorkers and visitors from around the world have flocked to the High Line since its opening two years ago, and the Whitney will be a perfect addition to the neighborhood."

"New York City has some of the world's most influential cultural institutions, most stunning public parks and most exciting neighborhoods. The Whitney's new home at the High Line in the Meatpacking District will be an example of all three coming together," said Harris.

"The revitalization of the Meatpacking District and the area along the High Line is a stunning example of the power of targeted public investment to drive significant economic development," said Steel. "We have seen the neighborhood grow rapidly into a hub of cultural and social activity attracting new businesses and jobs. And soon the Whitney will help draw even more New Yorkers and visitors from around the world to the area."

"Today, we begin to create the Whitney of the future, an aspirational space where contemporary artists can realize their visions and audiences can connect deeply with art," said Whitney Museum director Adam Weinberg. "We are enormously grateful to the City of New York, the board of trustees, our far-sighted donors, and our master architect, Renzo Piano, for bringing us to this decisive moment."

The new building will include 50,000 s/f of indoor galleries - double its existing gallery space - and 13,000 s/f of outdoor exhibition space on a series of rooftops. It will include an Education Center; a multi-use black box theater for film, video, and performance with an outdoor gallery; a 170-seat theater; and a Works on Paper Study Center, Conservation Lab, and Library Reading Room. Other amenities will include a public outdoor gathering space, a ground-floor restaurant and top-floor café, and a retail shop. Renzo Piano Building Workshop is designing the building, which is expected to be LEED-certified, in collaboration with architects Cooper, Robertson & Partners.

The new museum project is the result of an extensive partnership between the city and the Whitney Museum. The city sold the 36,000 s/f city-owned site to the Whitney, is providing a \$55 million capital investment in the project, and, through the office of the mayor, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the N.Y.C. Economic Development Corp., has provided extensive technical assistance to the Museum throughout the project's conception and implementation. It was approved by the City Planning Commission and the city council in 2008.

"Today is a remarkable day for art lovers the world over as well as residents of Manhattan's West Side. The Meatpacking District is already considered a great hub of culture, from its many galleries to the High Line, one of New York's premier destinations, and an aesthetic triumph in its own right," said Quinn. "With the addition of the Whitney, one of the world's foremost museums of Modern American Art, visitors will now have another big reason to experience the far West Side of Manhattan and discover what New Yorkers and area residents have known for years about the great cultural diversity offered here. I want to thank Mayor Bloomberg and everyone at the Whitney, they've done a tremendous job of reaching out to the community to prepare the neighborhood for this amazing project."

"This groundbreaking is a pivotal moment for the Whitney Museum and for lower Manhattan," said Borough President Stringer. "While Chelsea has historically been home to hundreds of small to medium sized galleries, it will now host one of the world's largest and most expansive collections of contemporary art, and it will be in good company. Over the last decade, the area linking Greenwich Village, Chelsea and the Meatpacking District has become one of the borough's most vibrant cultural destinations, with world-class culinary, athletic and artistic amenities. In 1930, the Whitney Museum was founded in Manhattan's downtown community on West Eighth St.; 81 years later, downtown is welcoming it home."

"Thanks to this extraordinary public-private partnership, the Museum's expanded home will create a wonderful new cultural destination at the base of the High Line," said Levin. "With dynamic new spaces for its remarkable exhibitions and public programs, the Whitney will build on its mission of bringing America's most talented artists to expanded audiences from across the five boroughs and around the world."

"The arrival of the new Whitney is another step in the evolution of one of New York's most interesting neighborhoods," said Pinsky. "The presence of this major cultural institution, nestled between the historic Gansevoort Meat Market, a long-standing presence in the area, and the High Line, will add to the amazing mix of uses that make the Meatpacking District the perfect blend of art, commerce and recreation."

"Renzo Piano has given the Whitney Museum building a dynamic, sculptural form that is itself an art form and cultural presence befitting the southern terminus and principal entry to the High Line," said Burden. "The creative design enables the building to serve myriad purposes, combining indoor exhibition space, terraced venues for outdoor exhibits and performances, open space on

Gansevoort Street as well as operational support for the High Line. By creating a vibrant place for art and for artists the Museum will reinforce the gallery district to the north, which was one of the goals of the West Chelsea rezoning."

"Since the opening two years ago of Section One, and with the impending opening of Section Two, the High Line has emerged as a must-visit destination for millions of New Yorkers and visitors," said Benepe. "The addition of the new Whitney Museum at the Gansevoort Street entrance to the High Line will provide a cultural anchor in the thriving Meatpacking District community."

"The design for the new museum emerges equally from a close study of the Whitney's needs and from a response to this remarkable site," said Piano. "We wanted to draw on its vitality and at the same time enhance its rich character. The first big gesture, then, is the cantilevered entrance, which transforms the area outside the building into a large, sheltered public space. At this gathering place beneath the High Line, visitors will see through the building entrance and the large windows on the west side to the Hudson River beyond. Here, all at once, you have the water, the park, the powerful industrial structures and the exciting mix of people, brought together and focused by this new building and the experience of art."

The Meatpacking District is a 20-square-block neighborhood on the far West Side, bordered by Chelsea, renowned for its art galleries, cultural organizations, and educational institutions, and historic Greenwich Village. Located 30 feet above street level on a 1930s freight railway, the High Line runs from Gansevoort Street to 20th Street and soon to 30th St. The public park has helped revitalize the area around it, supporting new residences, offices, restaurants, art galleries, hotels and shops.

The Gansevoort Meat Market, a cooperative of independently-owned businesses under lease with the City that specialize in the wholesale distribution and processing of meat for many of the region's top restaurants and hotels, has been operating at the same site since 1974, with meat businesses existing there since the 1950's. The lease, previously set to expire in 2014, has now been extended 20 years to 2031 with new boundaries to allow for development of the new Whitney Museum and adjacent High Line support facility, ensuring that Manhattan's only meat cooperative continue its important role in the City's industrial sector.

"For almost four decades, the Gansevoort Meat Market has been the only constant business enterprise in this ever changing neighborhood," said John Jobbagy, VP of the market. "Thanks to Mayor Bloomberg, we look forward with great confidence to the next 20 years as market tenants and welcome the Whitney to our block."

Founded in 1930 in Greenwich Village, the Whitney Museum of American Art is one of the preeminent institutions devoted to twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States, with a special focus on works by living artists. The Whitney's collection comprises over 19,000 works by more than 2,800 artists. The Whitney was first housed on West 8th St. It relocated in 1954 to West 54th St. and in 1966 inaugurated its present home, designed by Marcel Breuer, at 945 Madison Ave. The museum recently announced a multi-year agreement, in principle, with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in which the Met will present exhibitions and educational programming at the Marcel Breuer building beginning in 2015. The two museums also will seek to collaborate on collections sharing, publications and other education activities.

The ground breaking ceremony began with New York City percussion ensemble So Percussion performing a passage from Drumming by Steve Reich, a composer who has been closely associated with the Whitney. In keeping with the Whitney's tradition of presenting pioneering

performing arts, the ground breaking itself was set into motion by a specially commissioned piece, Breaking Ground, by Elizabeth Streb, performed by Streb and STREB Extreme Action Company. In Breaking Ground, Streb, wearing a helmet, stood beneath a barrel filled with dirt. Six dancers dove, one by one, through a series of panes of glass as dirt rained down from the barrel onto her.

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