



## **MAS unveils new designs for Grand Central by SOM, WXY and Foster; Revealed at the 2012 MAS Summit for New York City**

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The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) unveiled three architectural designs that re-imagine the public spaces in and around Grand Central Terminal and the East Midtown neighborhood. From a "skyway" that rises above Grand Central to a transformed Park Ave. Viaduct to expansive pedestrian plazas and bicycle paths, the designs will help inform the future of this critical neighborhood as Grand Central celebrates its 100th anniversary and as the city develops a new planning framework that calls for the re-zoning of the area's core.

Earlier this year, MAS launched "Grand Central ... The Next 100," commissioning three firms - Foster + Partners (Foster), Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), and WXY architecture + urban design (WXY) - to create a vision for the future of the public areas around the terminal and in East Midtown. The results of this design challenge were presented as part of the October 18-19 MAS Summit for N.Y.C., two days of talks, panel discussions and conversations about how to make the city more livable.

MAS president Vin Cipolla said, "There is perhaps no building more important in N.Y.C. than Grand Central. It is the anchor of a major commercial business district, a critical piece of infrastructure, and one of our most important urban transportation hubs. It is also one of the world's great public spaces.

"As the city considers a new re-zoning plan that will help N.Y.C. keep pace with other global capitals, there are critical issues that need to be at the core of this new, bold, vision for Midtown. First, the public experience must be at the center of the conversation - not the size of buildings. As Midtown evolves, we also must ensure that we protect the buildings that are essential to our history and find ways of updating and adapting existing buildings. Finally, any new development needs to meet the standards set by some of the great buildings in this area. The stunning work we unveiled today - produced by Foster, SOM & WXY - makes clear that there is much that can and should be done to re-invigorate Midtown," Cipolla said.

SOM's design for the transformation of this area embraces public space at many levels. Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) are re-imagined as Privately Funded Public Spaces (PFPS), allowing a variety of transformation and new public spaces. Light is brought down to the underground spaces, new corridors are created through buildings to facilitate pedestrian circulation at increased densities, streets (including Vanderbilt Ave. and the viaduct) are re-purposed as public spaces, and a new public space - a panoramic ring above Grand Central - rises above Midtown as a new kind of public experience and marker of New York's commitment to public space.

WXY sought to find ways to bring new energy and activity to this neighborhood by reinvigorating a number of key places - the base of the MetLife building as a new open space and cultural anchor,

opening up Vanderbilt Ave. to create seamless access to the tracks below grade, and a transformed Park Ave. viaduct.

In creating a new public space framework for Midtown, Foster sought to make a number of small interventions to gradually change the circulation and flow through the streets, buildings, and transit. The focus of their vision is ensuring that the buildings themselves are designed in such a way as to respond to a public space strategy - creating additional room to breathe around Grand Central. With a number of smaller interventions Midtown's trajectory is shifted - creating an opportunity to linger and admire - rather than simply race through.

Lord Norman Foster (Foster + Partners) said, "The Municipal Art Society's call to study the Next 100 years of Grand Central Terminal in the wider context of the city and its public realm represents an important and welcome debate that will help shape the future form of the city. The quality of a city's public realm reflects the level of civic pride and has a direct impact on the quality of everyday life. With the advent of the Long Island Rail Road East Side Access, along with the plan to re-zone the district, there has never been a better opportunity to tackle the issues of public access and mobility around one of the greatest rail terminals in the World."

Roger Duffy, Design Partner at SOM, said, "Throughout New York City's history significant urban growth has been matched by grand civic responses. The 1811 Commissioner's Plan, the creation of Central Park, zoning regulations in 1916 and 1961, and Grand Central Terminal itself have all resulted from this fundamental relationship. MAS's call to focus on the public spaces in and around East Midtown is an opportunity to propose a rebalancing of this equation, increasing the quantity and quality of public space as the city contemplates significant densification in the area. SOM is honored to participate in this important discussion about the future of New York."

Claire Weisz, Principal at WXY, said, "New zoning rules should trigger real transportation links to public space. One way is to harness the untapped potential of Grand Central's edges. The plan for Midtown's near future needs to make the Grand Central neighborhood a place people enjoy being in not just running through."

MAS has a long history in East Midtown, advocating for Grand Central's continued role as one of New York's premier civic spaces and thriving transportation hubs. When Grand Central was faced with the prospect of demolition in 1968, MAS, along with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis embarked on a successful campaign to save the Terminal.

Cipolla concluded, "MAS sees the confluence of the centennial, new development projects and the City's proposed re-zoning as a unique opportunity to re-envision and guide the future of one of the world's most iconic landmarks. This work will help guide MAS as we develop our upcoming report on The Future of Midtown. We look forward to working closely with the City and many other stakeholders to build on this research and to create a plan that renews and reenergizes the civic legacy of Grand Central for the Next 100 years."

The Foster, SOM and WXY designs are downloadable online at [MAS.org/blog](https://www.mas.org/blog).