



The Javits Convention Center - Miracle on 34th Street

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"Recycling" - plastic blue bags filled with empty bottles - has moved to a new level with the "Recycling" of the Javits Center. How many millions of recycling bags would it take to equal the epic recycling of the 1.768 million s/f Jacob K. Javits Convention Center.

The Javits Center, located on 11th Ave. between 34th and 39th St., was designed by I. M. Pei and Partners in 1979 and opened to the public in 1986. Early on there were storm clouds already forming over this project. Start with public access - essential to any convention center. For Javits, subway access was in the plans, but it never happened. Add years of inadequate funding for upkeep and maintenance. Then cost constraints which resulted in design and construction compromises. Combined, the formula for a perfect storm. For Javits, a gradual downward spiral as essential building components deteriorate to a point where they are no longer salvageable - as in falling apart.

If you think of the Javits Center, conceived and designed as the primary engine responsible for bringing trade shows and conventions to N.Y.C., it's hard to imagine this project failing at such a young age while older iconic buildings such as the Empire State Building or Rockefeller Center thrive. However, given the deteriorated condition, an ending - demolition - seemed inevitable.

Against all odds and predictions of a teardown, there was another alternative - recycle the building with a creative restoration. And under the radar that is exactly what has happened.

Credit for this "Recycling" Miracle goes to the Empire State Development Corp. and the Convention Center Development Corp. for engaging FXFOWLE Epstein. The assignment - evaluate the existing structure along with its functionality. Then develop a plan not only to address the existing deficiencies, but to rethink the building as to its functionality and its context in terms of its neighbors. The process - Itemize each defect. Evaluate each aspect of functionality. Develop, evaluate and test potential solutions for implementation to address the defects and issues of functionality. So step by step, problem by problem, solution by solution the old Javits is gone and replaced by the new - from new resized exterior glazing to the second largest green roof in the country - 6.75 acres.

Chances are you haven't seen it. Well make a point of stopping by. And if you can wait a couple of months, you will even be able to get there by subway - # 7 train. Who knew or even dreamed that it could be possible.

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