

Real Estate

The New York Times

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2024

Supertall, and Eager to Be a Good Neighbor



The building, to be known as 520 Fifth Avenue, is adorned with classic setbacks and arches.

By MATT YAN

A new mixed-use skyscraper in Midtown, embellished with arches and terraces, is set to pierce through New York City's skyline, adding another supertall to the mix.

Top, at 1,002 feet, the building is the second tallest on Fifth Avenue after the Empire State Building. Above, from left: The building is scheduled to be completed in 2026; the mixed-use skyscraper will include a members club called Moss, office spaces and residences; an estimated 2,500 construction workers will have worked on the job site by the time the project is finished.

The new tower, to be known as 520 Fifth Avenue, topped out in October. At 1,002 feet, the building is the second tallest on Fifth Avenue after the Empire State Building. It's also the tallest residential building on Fifth Avenue, and is scheduled to be completed in 2026, with phased occupancy starting next year.

Rabina, a Manhattan developer, collaborated on 520 Fifth Avenue with Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF), an architecture firm with a portfolio of other supertalls, like One Vanderbilt in Midtown and the Lotte World Tower in Seoul. Suffolk handled the construction, while Vicky Charles, a Soho House alum with celebrity-clients like George and Amal Clooney, David and Victoria Beckham and Harry Styles, oversaw the interior design.

Nestled at the corner of 43rd Street and Fifth Avenue, the slender structure, which sits on a quarter-acre lot, is adorned with arches and setbacks, nods to classic New York City architecture. The arches are made from glazed terra-cotta on the lower

floors, before switching to painted aluminum with bronze extrusions on higher floors. The building resonates with nearby buildings like Grand Central Terminal, the Fred F. French building and the Century Association next door, said James von Klemperer, the president and design principal at KPF.

The building has office space on the ninth through 34th floors and residences from the 42nd to 80th floors. Two floors above and below the lobby and retail spaces there will be a members club called Moss, featuring a dining program in collaboration with Union Square Events, founded by Danny Meyer; along with other amenities like a spa and athletic club. And on the 88th floor — named because it's 880 feet high — residents will have access to an amenity suite, complete with a solarium, a game room with a vintage billiards table and a private dining room.

"We took the top floor of the building, which is the most valuable residential floor, and turned it into a common amenity," said Ian Klein, senior vice president and the head of development at Rabina. "Whether you're buying on the 40th floor or the 70th floor, you can still go up and enjoy that view."

Sales for the residences, which are one- to four-bedrooms, began this year by Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group and started at \$1.7 million for a one-bedroom. Seventy percent of units have been sold, according

to a publicist for the building.

The design of the residences are about "really great quality, like a blank canvas," said Ms. Charles, a co-founder of Charles and Co. "If you think about furniture like the clothes on the body, you're creating a healthy body to be dressed."

The offices, however, are meant to feel like an extension of the home, with private, gender-neutral restrooms, outdoor space on nearly all the floors, separate HVAC systems on each floor and even windows that open — in case you need some fresh Midtown air. When designing the offices, Ms. Charles had to rethink her approach, especially because she started the initial process before the pandemic and the rise of remote work.

By the time the project is complete, an estimated 2,500 construction workers will have worked on the job site, said Chris Koehnken, a project executive at Suffolk, with a typical day having 300 to 325 people on site. But now that the building is topped out, which means that the highest concrete floor is finished, the crane can come off and the elevators can start, Mr. Koehnken said.

"It's also a sign of things to come, like we're there," he said. "We're in a new phase of the project and a lot more activity on site, but we're that much closer to the end of the tunnel."

The interviews at right have been edited for clarity.



James von Klemperer,
KPF, president and design principal
I think all tall buildings, especially, have a kind of responsibility that goes beyond the program and the site. Because once you emerge into the skyline in a significant way, which this building will, the skyline is almost viewed. I think, by us New Yorkers as public property. If you put up a terrible profile on the skyline, everybody has to look at it from uptown, downtown, Long Island, New Jersey. And it's very subjective, but we feel we should be doing something to grace the skyline, not to give it some defect.



Ian Klein,
Rabina, senior vice president and head of development

A first-order principle for us was: Don't do a glass and metal curtain wall building, which is what everyone expects you to do in Midtown. I think that was somewhat prompted by the residential because we wanted to give it somewhat of a more comfortable feel. But I think it was also just a reaction against what people identify as a somewhat commodified form of real estate development — to try and do something that felt distinctive and unique and also kind of human.



Vicky Charles,
Charles & Co., interior designer

When things don't feel comfortable, it's a subconscious thing. Sometimes that might just be the lighting is too bright or too harsh or the colors are too cold. You can't really describe why you don't like it, but it just doesn't feel quite right. We just wanted to make sure that same language comes through in all the spaces, that it's softer, it's warmer.



Chris Koehnken,
Suffolk, project executive

The nice thing with these projects is you look at them, and I can stand there and identify: "I remember how that was a challenge or this was a challenge, and what we had to change here; or what this originally was and now how it looks." Those are the things I get out of when I look at a building. It's a sense of accomplishment that there might have been some issues getting there, but we ultimately solved the riddle.



Three renderings of the new skyscraper, clockwise, from right: the building's exterior; one of the rooms in the amenity suite, which is on the 88th floor; office spaces, nearly all of which will have private outdoor space.



IMAGES BY BENJAMIN STUBBINS