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Friday, July 30, 2021

ReThinkNYC
Weekend Ruminations #4:
A Continuing Series

**Proposed Supertalls Threaten to Block Views of the
Empire State and Chrysler Buildings**

*Developers Continue to Miss the Point that
New York's Identity, Feel and Character
Are a Big Part of Why People Live, Work and Visit Here.
When Will They Ever Learn?*



Sophia Loren and Carlo Ponti lend Italian grace to the Roman architecture of the original Penn Station with the Empire State Building standing vigil for the metropolis we call home.

Bettmann, 1958

Governor Cuomo's and the Empire State Development Corporation's proposals for Penn Station will block the view of the Empire State Building. Meanwhile, the powers-that-be have already approved a supertall next to Grand Central Terminal which blocks views of the Chrysler Building and marginalizes Grand Central Terminal. The Empire Station Complex which is proposed for Penn Station will fund incremental below ground (which is disgraceful) station improvements in exchange for major zoning variances for new construction on neighborhood properties somehow condemned as blighted.

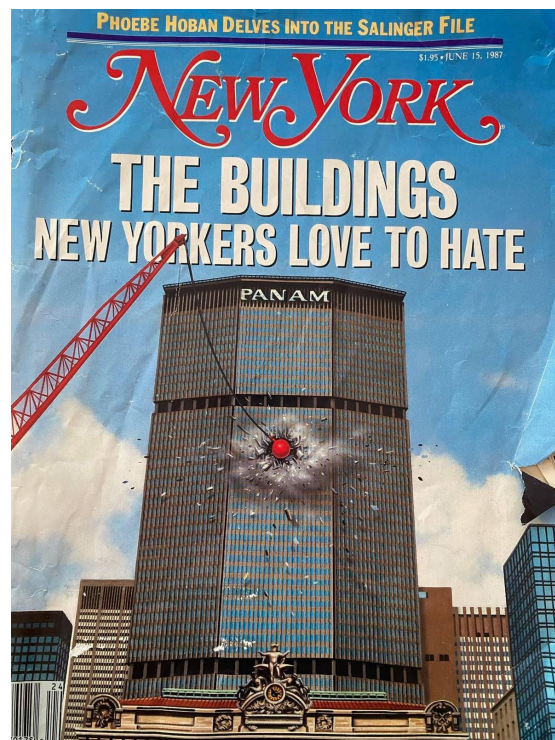
Sam Turvey, Chairperson of RethinkNYC, asks:

“Do we really need to treat our cityscape and skyline so cavalierly? Many will shrug their shoulders fatalistically and say ‘that’s progress,’ or point out that ‘skyscrapers get eclipsed at some point -- look at the Singer and Woolworth Buildings.’ I think this case is different and that thinking needs to change. We should be more advanced in our thinking on view corridors. The best example of why is the Pan Am/MetLife Building behind Grand Central. Had it not been built, we would have stunning, Paris-worthy views up and down Park Avenue of Grand Central Terminal and the French Renaissance New York Central tower just north of it. It is a signature view of New York that we have tragically lost.”



The New York Central Building (background) and Grand Central Terminal (foreground) before they were separated by hermetically sealed glass towers.

ReThink NYC Architectural Lead Richard Cameron added, “When you lose too many of these vistas, you begin tampering with the identity of the city -- the result being a nondescript skyline that looks like every place else. While it is hard to put a price on it quantitatively, I am certain we will be paying and will continue to pay a very real price for treating the Empire State Building, our equivalent of the Campanile in Venice, and Chrysler Buildings this way. We are tempting fate. It makes no sense to do this. The Empire Station Complex should have been designed in ways that complement the Empire State Building and include it as a key feature -- not expunge it from the cityscape.”

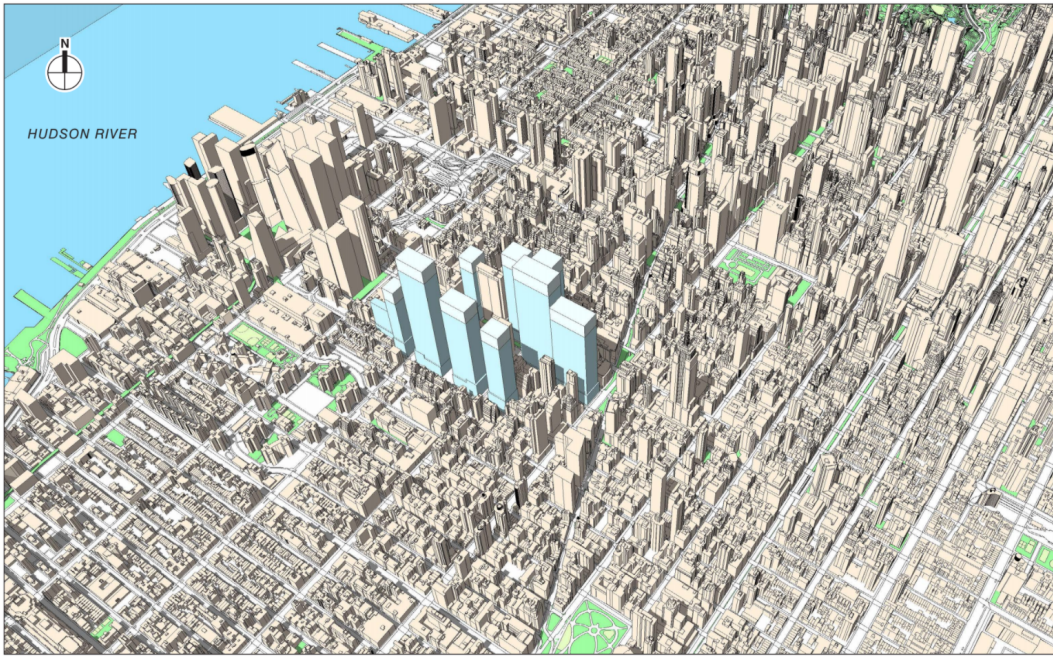


Had the Pan Am/MetLife building been built elsewhere, a signature, world-class vista would have been preserved for generations of New Yorkers.

New York Magazine, 1987

Closing Turvey added:

“Like so much about the proposed Empire Station Complex, this is another anti-urban, anti-New York gash in the fabric of the built environment. If it proceeds, it will hasten the day when we all wake up and wonder whatever became of our city and its unique urbanism. This proposal needs to be stopped.”



The massing study for the Empire Station Complex showing its proximity and similarity to the unloved Hudson Yards colossus. Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Empire Station Complex

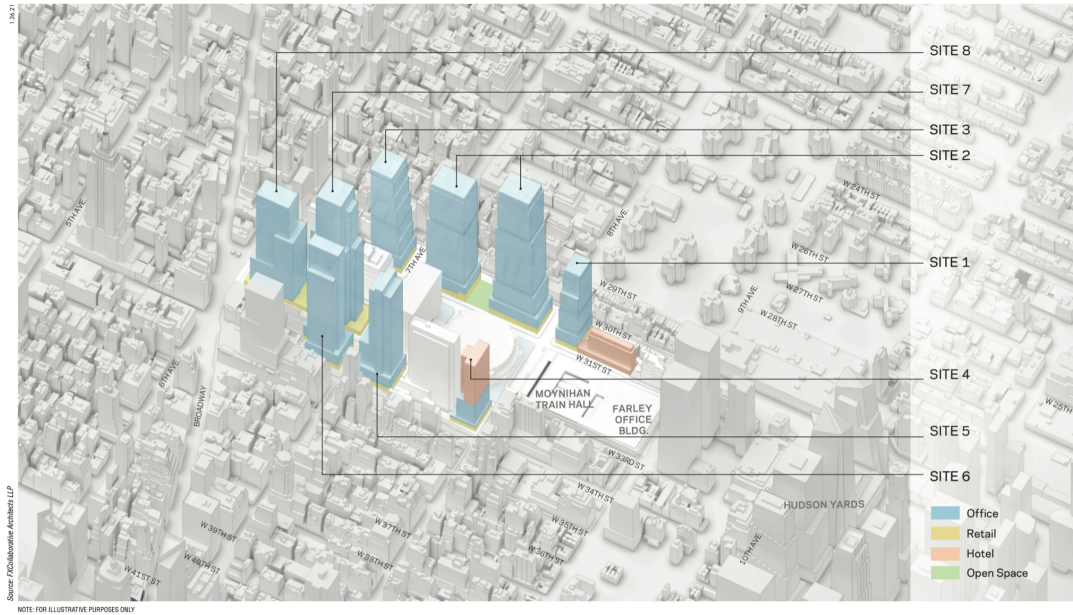


Existing Conditions



2038 With Action – Site 4, 5 and 6

The impact of the proposed Empire Station Complex on views of the Empire State Building looking east on 34th Street. Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Empire Station Complex



*Building a “precarious urban monoculture” similar to the much-derided Hudson Yards [See [“As the Pandemic Fades, Debating the Future of the Central Business District”](#) by Emily Badger and Quoc Trung Bui for the New York Times; PDF version [here](#)].
Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Empire Station Complex*



A soft hued, forgiving and self-serving rendering of the north towers of the proposed Empire Station Complex.

*Not shown are the south towers, which would extend for 1.5 blocks on 31st Street.
They would encircle (and suffocate) Penn Station and rend the fabric of the neighborhood.
Vornado Realty Trust*

Join the movement! [Rethink Penn Station NYC](#)

For details of the ReThinkNYC plan, [click here to see our complete proposal](#).

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*ReThinkNYC is a New York City-based non-profit organization specialized in transportation
infrastructure
and how it relates to complex urban, governance and socio-economic issues.*

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