



By Lillie Gissen
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Everything Old is New Again in Downtown Architecture

Downtown buildings have been repurposed to accommodate the new 24/7 neighborhood.

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After the tragedy of the terror attacks of 9/11 it was hard to imagine Downtown ever becoming as vibrant a neighborhood as it is today, but the devastating attacks provided an opportunity to rebuild and create a whole new Downtown more reflective of the changing face of New York.

Tax incentives brought new businesses to Lower Manhattan. New business brought new people and families. New families brought new needs for housing and services. And instead of throwing out old architectural marvels, many were repurposed for a new Downtown.

"The Downtown Alliance was founded over 20 years ago, and one of our first initiatives was to help repurpose vacant commercial properties for residential conversion," President of the Downtown Alliance Jessica Lappin said.

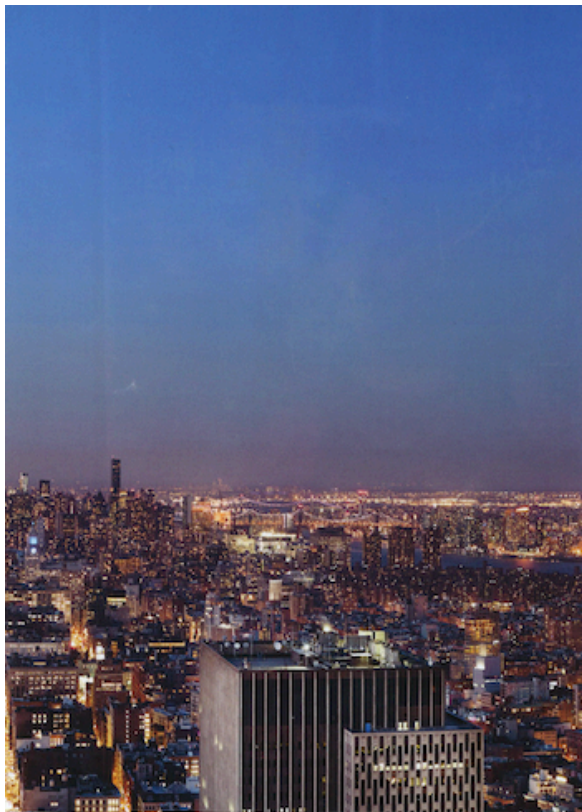
"Lower Manhattan has a strong history of bringing new uses to

classic buildings," she added. "It's a neighborhood that takes great pride in appreciating the value of New York's architectural heritage, and it's always gratifying when we see new economic development rehabilitating our historic properties."

Woolworth Building

The legendary Woolworth Building, constructed in 1913 and once New York's tallest skyscraper, was the business center of the city—and an architectural monument of The Gilded Age. Today, the top 30 floors are being transformed into 33 sterling luxury condos, drawing new residents to its doors opening later this year.

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The Corbin Building

The Fulton Street Transit Hub that opened its doors in late 2014 is a modern, sprawling mall that caters to commuters, tourists and residents.

"MTA's decision to preserve its neighbor the Corbin Building in their development was equal parts beauty and function," Lappin said. "Today, that building serves as a connection to the Dey Street concourse and the World Trade Center. Their vision in planning now allows travelers to go from Fulton Street to Brookfield without ever having to brave the elements outside."

Pier A

Pier A, built in 1886 to house the Harbor Police and used by the FDNY from 1960 until 1992, had become an eyesore on Battery Park. But in 2009, thanks to restaurant and development company HPH and the Poulakakos family, work began to restore and convert it into a massive and attractive restaurant and bar complex. The Pier A Harbor House, which opened in November 2014, features popular spots such as The Long Hall and Oyster Bar along with its newest addition: BlackTail, a retro Cuban inspired cocktail bar.

"Sometimes it's easy to forget we're surrounded by water, but their investment in this pier has given us a place to reconnect with NYC's harbor," Lappin said.

The Cunard Building

Since 2010, the Léman Manhattan Preparatory School has housed its Upper School students on the top floors of the historic Cunard Building. It originally opened in 1921 and was once known as the Standard & Poors Building. The building featured more than 600,000 square feet of space in a stirring Italian Renaissance style and later served as a U.S. Postal Office and became a New York City Landmark.

"It was closed to the public for over two decades, so its reopening was greatly anticipated. Now the tenants capture the diversity that makes up the Lower Manhattan workforce...with a school that serve students from over 20 countries," Lappin explained.

"The preservation of our historic architecture is what gives Lower Manhattan its authentic feel and allows us to celebrate our history by keeping it alive," she added.

"To see these iconic buildings exist alongside cutting edge architecture is something that makes Lower Manhattan a very special destination for businesses and residents who want something unique." ♦

Woolworth Building - Photo courtesy of Brand by Williams New York

The Corbin Building - Photo courtesy of Patrick Cashion / Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Pier A - Photo courtesy of Pier A