

GROWTH STRATEGIES

CityWide Growth: Manhattan's Far West Side

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Manhattan's far west side ("Midtown West"), from the high 20's through the 50's west of Tenth Avenue, has been characterized as an underutilized area, ripe for redevelopment. The Jacob Javits Convention Center and the MTA's Caemmerer Rail Yards dominate the 30's. The 40's and 50's house midtown Manhattan's industrial infrastructure.

Various organizations have prepared plans for the far west side, notably:

- Manhattan Borough President Virginia Fields, Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc. consultants, "A Vision for the West Side Rail Yards";
- NYC 2012, sponsors of New York's Olympics bid proposal (www.nyc2012.com);
- The New York City Department of City Planning (<http://nyclink.org/planning>);
- The New York Jets;
- The Hells Kitchen Neighborhood Association.

Factors often cited as hindering its development include zoning (low scale, restricted uses), distance from mass transit, and high development costs relative to realizable rents. While some argue for the stimulus of a tax incentive, others note that the market is already pushing westward on its own. The reconstruction of the Farley Post Office as a rail station will reinforce this emerging trend.

Issues surrounding the development of Manhattan's far west side include:

- Access and mass transit.

Improved access to the far west side must be integral to planning for its redevelopment. Commuter rail and public transit connections are paramount, including extension of the Number 7 line to serve the Javits Center..

- Expansion of the Javits Center.

With 800,000 sq. ft., the Javits Center cannot accommodate the largest exhibitions. Its enlargement is an important economic development priority for the city, crucial to retain New York's status as a premier location for trade shows.

- Development over the MTA yards

This development should be based on a cohesive mixed use master plan for the area. Decking over the 30 acre yards, which are used to store and maintain commuter rail cars, will significantly increase development costs and accordingly will require a substantial level of density.

- The bid for 2012 summer Olympics

Any planning for sports facilities on Manhattan's west side, whether for an Olympic stadium, a convention center extension convertible to a football field, or a freestanding stadium for the New York Jets, must occur in conjunction with transportation improvements. The plan must address and mitigate congestion and parking impacts from game day traffic affecting theaters, businesses, west side residents, Madison Square Garden and the Javits Center. Finally, the environmental review must ensure that all of the area's infrastructure systems have adequate capacity to handle the increased demand.

- Land use mix

While built to lower densities than the central business district, this area nonetheless holds an active mix of essential uses ranging from plumbing suppliers to automotive services to theatrical support. Any redevelopment plan must accommodate such uses.

- Open space and recreation

Open space is a high priority for west side residents, including the possibility of converting the High Line and the waterfront to recreational use.