

Municipal Art Society Unveils Designs for Future of MSG and Penn Station

Four Top Architecture Firms Respond to MAS Design Challenge

(NEW YORK – MAY 29, 2013) **The Municipal Art Society of New York**, in its catalytic role to ignite discussion, effect change and provide an opportunity to re-envision Penn Station and Madison Square Garden, today unveiled four compelling design possibilities for a new Penn Station and Madison Square Garden in the culmination of its ***Design Challenge for a New Penn Station and Madison Square Garden***. Today's event, at the TimesCenter, follows a potentially game-changing vote regarding the future of the site at the City Planning Commission last Wednesday.

The four designs were presented by **Diller Scofidio + Renfro with Josh Sirefman, H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture, SHoP Architects and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)**. Each re-imagined the cramped and dismal Penn Station as an urban gateway, including relocating Madison Square Garden, which now sits atop the station and prevents needed expansion. A striking new MSG complex is suggested for sites ranging from immediately adjacent to the transit hub to a 16-acre site on the west side waterfront.

"These four firms were selected because of their outstanding design talent and wide-ranging experience on complex urban sites – including the Highline in Chelsea, a new arena linked to a subway station in downtown Brooklyn, the planned conversion of the Farley Post Office building, and other significant infrastructure projects around the world," said Vin Cipolla, president of The Municipal Art Society.

"This Design Challenge is an invitation for the public to get involved in thinking about the possibilities for Penn Station and for the arena. We are deeply appreciative of the creative ideas and stunning opportunities envisioned by these world-class firms," Mr. Cipolla continued. "They have demonstrated that there are a range of practical and liberating possibilities for an expanded, world-class Penn Station and a great new Madison Square Garden. They have set a brilliant and achievable standard to serve commuters, fans, and the future of Manhattan's west side and the City itself."

Diller Scofidio + Renfro with Josh Sirefman offers Penn Station 3.0, which will be a *city within a city*, a porous and light-filled civic structure filled with diverse new programs that reflect the hybridity of contemporary urban life. Not just a gateway to New York, the station will be a destination in itself with fast, transit-oriented programs layered with slower destinations in a gradient of decelerating speeds from tracks to roof. The building will host transient and resident populations

including commuters, office workers, fabricators, shoppers, foodies, culture seekers and urban explorers. In this plan, MSG will be located to the west end of the Farley building on Ninth Avenue, with access to Eighth Avenue.

In pursuit of making rail the “mode of choice”, **H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture** asserts that several inextricably linked interventions must be made to improve the City’s essential systems and better express its culture: Public Space, Entertainment, and the Environment; Transportation; Education; and Economic Development. A relocation of Madison Square Garden to a 16-acre site on the west side waterfront provides an enhanced venue with a singular new identity and expanded tourist, hospitality, and entertainment opportunities. The New Penn Station, including an eight-track high-speed rail expansion to the south, accommodates increased capacity and integrates community and traveler amenities, including a new three-acre public park, retail complex, and two-acre roof garden. Redevelopment of the Farley Post Office creates a centrally located Center for Education. And, perhaps most importantly, 24 million square feet of private development around Penn Station and up Seventh Avenue serves as an economic engine for improvements and a revived world-class commercial district.

SHoP Architects’ plan imagines an expanded main hall of Penn Station as a bright, airy and easily navigable space that defines a center of a new destination district, Gotham Gateway. In addition to striking public architecture, the project proposes significant security and rail capacity improvements that address major needs at the existing station. The team proposes new development, as well as new parks and amenities, around the station to help defray the required public investment, including an extension of the High Line that connects the new station to a glorious and financeable new Madison Square Garden.

SOM proposes to grow the footprint of Penn Station by two additional blocks to accommodate high speed rail lines for the Northeast Corridor, expanded commuter rail service for all of the tri-state area, and direct rail connections to JFK, LGA, and EWR. This last connection would allow one to go straight from the curb of 7th Avenue, through security at Penn, onto a train, and directly to one’s gate. The station itself is open and intuitive. A central, transparent Ticketing Hall is placed at the center of the site, with dedicated vehicular drop-off and radial, pedestrian connections to the city surrounding it. Below this are two concourses running North-South, seamlessly enabling passengers to move from ground level to below grade. Retail lines these circulation spaces, integrating the station into the surrounding streetscape. Finally, at the lowest levels are the expanded platforms, where visitors arriving from an overnight flight from Hong Kong rub elbows with a commuter on her way to Morristown. With all of these networks intersecting at Penn Station, its central hall would become the iconic gateway for nearly every visitor around the world. Around the Station, Midtown West will continue to grow.

Private development adjacent to a major transportation node is perfectly sensible – even desirable. That includes MSG, whose natural location would be adjacent to, but not on top of, a transit hub.

The firms were given the provocation in April, and had until today to complete the challenge. Mr. Cipolla served as host for the presentations of renderings, models and plans. **Michael Kimmelman**, the architecture critic of *The New York Times*, served as the moderator of a discussion and question and answer session that followed.

A Brief Background on the Bigger Picture

MAS believes 2013 presents New York City with a truly unique opportunity.

Madison Square Garden's 50-year special permit to operate an arena on its current site has expired. In December 2012, MSG filed an application to continue to operate an arena on this site *in perpetuity*. That request is now going through the City's land use review process with a final decision expected by the City Council in July.

In March, MAS, working in close partnership with the Regional Plan Association (RPA), formed the Alliance for a New Penn Station. Together they are building a coalition to represent the millions of people who use Penn Station every year and the extraordinary economic potential of a new state-of-the-art train station and arena and advocating for a 10-year term for the special permit. Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, State Senator Brad Hoylman and Community Board 5 recommended that the permit be restricted to a 10-year term. In April, MAS launched the *Design Challenge for a New Penn Station and Madison Square Garden*, meant to provoke ideas and visions to help re-envision the site from four of New York City's best design firms.

On May 22, the Alliance welcomed the decision by the City Planning Commission to grant Madison Square Garden a 15-year permit to occupy the arena's current site, opening the way for the eventual creation of both a world-class Penn Station and a world-class sports and entertainment arena. But the Alliance remains deeply concerned that a provision contained in the Commission's recommendation would allow MSG to obtain a permit *in perpetuity* by striking a deal with the railroads that operate within Penn Station. Such a potentially fatal loophole would only require the signoff of the planning department, avoiding any public review of a deal that could permanently saddle our city and region with an overcrowded, grim transit hub.

The Alliance also contends that a shorter permit – for 10 years – would be a more effective catalyst for the public and private sector to focus on launching a project of this magnitude.

“The Alliance will continue its campaign to withdraw this invitation to a self-serving backroom deal and reach out to members of the City Council to close the loophole, when they have their final say in this phase of the process,” Mr. Cipolla said. The Alliance will also continue to work toward a tighter permit timeframe of 10 years.

City Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden said, on the morning of the CPC vote: “This is a moment in time that could – and should – have historic consequences for the City. This is the moment for civic and governmental leadership to come together and undertake a comprehensive planning process and funding plan with the goal of building new arena on another site and the full redevelopment of Penn Station into a modern train facility with improved track capacity and public amenities.

“This is the time to focus energy, vigilance, vision leadership, and political leverage. It must involve City, State and Federal governments who must work jointly with Madison Square Garden and the railroads, in partnership with civic organization, and other stakeholders,” the Commissioner continued. “With clear coordination, realistic planning and reliable funding - with public and political will – such a project is not only possible, but there is no more important initiative to consider for the future of the region, the city and Midtown Manhattan. “

The Alliance for a New Penn Station continues to grow. The next step in the public process will be a public hearing at the New York City Council in June, followed by a vote of the full City Council in July where the final decision on the permit will be achieved.

“A site which should be an economic development anchor for Midtown and Hudson Yards is instead a serious challenge to the global competitiveness and economic health of New York City,” Mr. Cipolla said. “A new Penn Station and a new arena will be an economic engine for New York City – creating thousands of jobs, unlocking billions of dollars in additional private investment, making millions of commutes a year faster and more comfortable, and re-affirming our sense that New York City can take on big projects and get them done.”

“New York City deserves a world-class train station and truly dynamic arena,” Mr. Cipolla continued, “but if the City Council approves the Garden’s special permit with a loophole that allows them to operate on the site *in perpetuity*, New York City will have neither.”

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The Municipal Art Society of New York has led New York City's livability movement since 1893. MAS's mission is to advocate for public policies, private sector practices, individual agency and community engagement for a resilient built environment that encourages our city's economic vitality, cultural vibrancy, environmental sustainability, livability and social diversity. For more information visit MAS.org.