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A rendering of COOKFOX Architects' vision for St. John's Terminal, as seen from Houston Street.

**"THE NEW ST. JOHN'S TERMINAL WILL BE 'AN URBAN CAMPUS' WITH A CALIFORNIA FEEL," SAYS ADAM FRAZIER, HEAD OF LEASING FOR OXFORD PROPERTIES.**

## Future Perfect

Once an early-20th-century freight train station, the New York City High Line's south end is slated to become an ultramodern office space.

By *Marcelle Sussman Fischler*

In 1934, when the New York Central Railroad's new St. John's Terminal was completed, the massive warehouse-style building connected the freight line with Manhattan's West Side. Its location at the southern end of the elevated High Line viaduct made it possible for 227 train cars to unload goods needed by local businesses. At the time, the improvement project was hailed for sparking "a new era for the industrial West Side."

Flash forward 84 years. The southern terminus of the High Line is about to be transformed into the "workplace of the future," says Rick Cook, founding partner of COOKFOX Architects. The planned 1.3 million square feet of commercial office space intertwined with three acres of greenery may herald another innovative new era.

Located at 550 Washington Street, in an increasingly vibrant Hudson Square, the building encompasses two Manhattan city blocks adjacent to Hudson River Park's Pier 40 and situated at the intersection of the West Village, SoHo, and Tribeca.

The new St. John's Terminal will be "an urban campus" with a California feel, says Adam Frazier, head of leasing for Oxford Properties Group, the developer, which paid \$700 million for the defunct terminus. "The way we designed it, it could help businesses be more productive and enhance their brand."

With its verdant entry plaza, landscaped terraces, and rooftop gardens, the building is poised to jump-start the next generation of high-performance, biophilic workplaces. The idea is to boost "wellness and productivity for occupants," Cook says. "People feel good when they are connected to nature."

The new design will also "preserve the history and authenticity of this important piece of rail infrastructure that once connected the world to New



The building's fourth-floor wraparound terrace, with views of the Freedom Tower.

York City," Cook adds. The railbeds that are currently part of the building will remain. The overpass will be removed to open views between Washington Street and Pier 40, all the way to the Hudson River.

The complex has more than 500 feet of frontage on Hudson River Park.

South of Houston Street, the building has three floors, with industrial-style, factory-mullioned windows. A new set-back fourth level has a wrap-around terrace. At one end is a nine-story tower with floor-to-ceiling glass.

"It is more groundscraper than skyscraper," Cook says. Its 100,000-square-foot floor plates, which are rare in Manhattan, "are more amenable to a future workplace," where collaboration and flexibility are paramount.

"There was a decision early on by Oxford to do the longest, lowest building we could possibly build on the site," Cook says. "The creative workforce doesn't want to work in the corporate office tower their parents worked in."

Instead, "now people want to work in the same cool, lofty environment they want to live," he adds. Previously, work and living spaces were separate worlds.

The building has loftlike 15-foot ceilings and is extremely flexible.

"We went outside the box to think about things that they would be looking for in the future," Frazier says. "This building is transformational."

The new terminal is expected to be completed in 2021.