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<http://www.wsj.com/articles/a-midcentury-building-is-remade-for-today-1453946294>

## A Midcentury Building Is Remade for Today

The structure at 390 Madison Ave. is getting a wholesale makeover and eight extra floors



View from the new terrace at 390 Madison Ave. PHOTO: ADRIENNE GRUNWALD FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By **KEIKO MORRIS**

A project under way at 390 Madison Ave. is taking a mid-20th century office building once shrouded in dark glass and turning it into a light-filled, 21st-century office building—only taller.

Sections of floors will be removed, creating the high ceilings that modern tenants desire, and a wraparound terrace will be built on the eighth floor. The square-footage removed from these lower floors will be added to the top—an eight-story addition of pricier office space that also lends a slimmer overall shape to the 1953 structure, currently 24 floors.

“We’ve done it before, but never to this extent,” said Doug Hocking, principal at Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates PC, which worked on the job. “This is a great story of adaptive reuse.”

The exterior will also brighten. The blackish glass that covered the original brick facade is gone. It will be supplanted by stylish, floor-to-ceiling glass that brings in much more light.

Sparks flew the other day at the site as welders fused external braces to the building beams, necessary because other supporting components—including the brick facade—are being removed. The new functional features are also a part of the reimagined building’s aesthetic.

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### The Shape of Things to Come

Architects have shrunk the size and shape of several floors of a 1953 office building at 390 Madison Ave. and used that square footage to add to the building’s height.



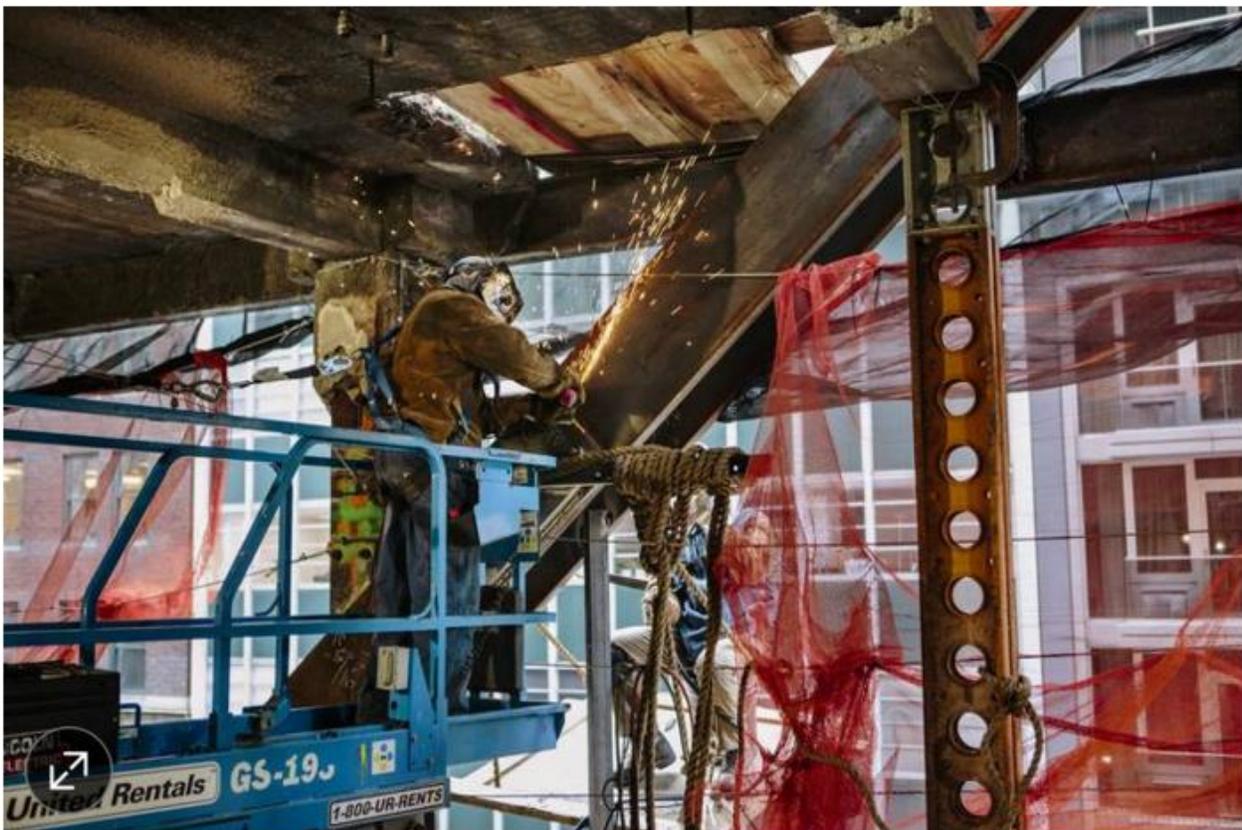
“The structural element became visible on the outside, and we decided to run with it,” said Mr. Hocking, describing the feature as one of the “great joys” of the project. “I personally abhor ornament and things that are unnecessary, but you see that [the diagonal support system] doesn’t extend through the new construction. It’s just an honest building.”

Developer L&L Holding Co. is overseeing on the project, working with architects at KPF and structural engineers Severud Associates. The plan will remove 18% of the floor space on the tower’s lower portion to create open levels with fewer columns and high ceilings.

Envisioning the redevelopment of the building was a tricky endeavor, and could serve as a template for other area landlords with older properties.

The city is reviewing rezoning recommendations for Midtown East. At the moment, however, tearing down and rebuilding 390 Madison would have meant losing about 160,000 square feet of floor space, because the original structure was erected before current codes downsized the buildable space allowed, according to L&L.

Clarion Partners, the managing agent for the owner, the New York State Common Retirement Fund, brought in L&L, which has a track record of redeveloping older buildings. A long-term ground lease expired and left the building vacant in January 2014.



A welder works on a diagonal bracing beam. PHOTO: ADRIENNE GRUNWALD FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“We said, ‘How do you keep the same-size building and yet make it a 21st-century building that required much more than a lobby and new elevators,’” said David Levinson, chief executive of L&L.

Architects and engineers started with an analysis of the building’s weaknesses: relatively low ceilings and large lower floors with space too far from the building’s perimeter to receive sufficient natural light.

They eliminated some setbacks that gave sections of the building a wedding-cake shape, carved out new terraces and removed floor sections to create ceilings double the typical height in some areas. One section is 200 feet by 45 feet, column-free and with double-high ceilings. Floors on the eight-story addition also will have higher ceilings.

Efforts to tackle a such complicated redevelopment project don't happen enough in the city, said Mary Rowe, executive vice president of the Municipal Art Society of New York. The model of adaptive reuse has potential for smaller projects such as brownstones and smaller residential buildings.

While the new design is intended to transform the interior space for potential tenants, the corner ground-floor retail space, inspired by Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, aims to influence the surrounding street. The team removed floor slabs and columns to create an all-glass space with tall ceilings accented by a sloped exterior corner, Mr. Levinson said.

At the moment, L&L envisions bringing in some sort of food venue to create excitement and buzz at the building, just as it brought Eataly to 200 Fifth Ave. and helped reshape the area.

“The idea was to have a big impact on Madison Avenue retail,” Mr. Levinson said of 390 Madison Ave. “We wanted to do something dynamic. This faces uptown traffic. It’s a very powerful gesture.”