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Cuomo's Announcement Gives Manhattan's Last Frontier (11th Avenue) a Boost

Last week, Gov. Andrew Cuomo made headlines when he announced that both Pennsylvania Station and the Javits Convention Center would be getting a much-needed infusion of government largesse.

This will no doubt make the story of what's happening on Manhattan's Far West Side even more fascinating. Especially a strip that has long been written off and is finally getting its due.

Eleventh Avenue runs between the Big Apple's Meatpacking District (just below West 13th Street) north to West 58th Street, beyond which it's commonly referred to as West End Avenue.

In its current incarnation, 11th Avenue is New York City's auto row; if you want to buy a car in Manhattan, you will find yourself there. However, changes coming to the area will soon remake the face of 11th Avenue—for developers, perhaps Manhattan's last frontier—for good.

The slow march west has been happening for more than a quarter of a century. In

June 1989, *The New York Times* wrote about law firm Cravath, Swaine & Moore moving to 825 11th Avenue from Downtown's Financial District: "The firm's new stake... will be for the bar what the Dakotas were for homesteaders... a bold leap to the frontier." It seems that the pioneering lawyers,

who renewed their lease for another 15 years in 2007, had the right idea. Several office tenants, including advertising firm Ogilvy & Mather, followed them to the "wilderness west of Broadway."

While Cravath, Swaine & Moore renewed their lease, Ogilvy & Mather decided in 2010 to move even farther west to 636 11th Avenue, putting them one block from the Hudson River, just north of a tavern dating to 1868 and a large number of residential towers.

Of course, the opening of the High Line gave 11th Avenue another jolt. New buildings like the Whitney Museum at the southern end, the Frank Gehry-designed IAC building at West 18th Street and the adjacent Ateliers Jean Nouvel residential

building added to the excitement generated by the elevated park.

But even farther north, 11th Avenue presents tantalizing opportunities. The Javits Center—which Mr. Cuomo promised to expand by half its current size—stretches from West 34th to West 40th Street, while the Ink48 luxury hotel is found at 11th Avenue and West 48th Street. Ogilvy & Mather's former Chocolate Factory Building is at 636 11th Avenue, and the Pyramid is a new residential building under construction between 11th and 12th Avenues at West 57th Street.

Finally, the 1931 Starrett-Lehigh Building sits at West 26th Street. The 1.8 million-square-foot former freight terminal and warehouse building was converted to office use after World War II, and later became a big draw for large fashion and dot.com companies in the late 1990s, despite the long commute to the Far West Side for most of their workers.

Two recent occurrences will almost certainly lead to more development on the avenue in the next few years: the opening of the new 7 subway line to West 34th Street

(making the Javits Center and other parts of 11th Avenue more accessible), and the development of the Hudson Yards station east of 11th Avenue.

It is believed that new development on Eleventh Avenue will eventually price out the automobile business. The Jaguar dealership at 787 11th Avenue, a building that was recently purchased for \$255 million from Ford, is now on a month-to-month tenancy—which means that the new owner has carte blanche to develop when it deems the time is right.

What does this mean for the existing owners and commercial tenants on 11th Avenue? If a developer can raze a building and develop a residential or hotel in its place, the current owners and lessees should be able to leverage their positions.

Eleventh Avenue—east and west—really is the last frontier in Manhattan. Owners and long-term lessees should anticipate a nice payday.

A lawyer by training and background, Richard Charkham is executive director of Colliers International in New York. For the last 20 years, he has advised corporate tenants globally.



Richard Charkham