

**The New York Times** Reprints

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit [www.nytreprints.com](http://www.nytreprints.com) for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)



November 27, 2011

# From Ashes of Olympic Bid, a Future Rises for the Far West Side

By **CHARLES V. BAGLI**

Late in his first term, Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) suffered a stinging defeat when, after an extensive planning and public relations effort, New York City lost its bid to host the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Now, though, a vibrant neighborhood is rising in the area where the Olympic stadium and complex would have stood on the Far West Side of [Manhattan](#). As a result, officials, developers and urban planners are embracing an unlikely notion: the Olympic bid's defeat may have been one of the best things to happen for the city's growth in recent memory.

The Bloomberg administration repurposed many elements of the bid to create Hudson Yards, the commercial and residential district taking shape west of Eighth Avenue, a once-desolate area of factories, lofts and parking lots between 30th and 43rd Streets.

Fifteen sleek residential towers have sprung up since 2005, the year that the Olympic bid was rejected, and a dozen hotels have muscled their way onto these blocks.

This month, one of the city's biggest developers, the Related Companies, announced tentative plans to erect a 51-story office tower on the spot where the Olympic stadium would have stood, with [Coach](#), the luxury retailer, as the anchor tenant.

No one expects the Far West Side to look like the office canyons on Avenue of the Americas anytime soon. Another deep recession in the next few years could undermine nascent plans.

Still, city officials predict that within two decades, Hudson Yards could have more office space than Baltimore or Portland, Ore., and as many apartments as Stamford, Conn.

An extension of the No. 7 subway line from Times Square to 34th Street and 11th Avenue, at a cost of more than \$2 billion, is two-thirds complete and set to open in December 2013. Work is to begin early next year on a new tree-lined boulevard between 10th and 11th

Avenues. Both of these projects were originally conceived for the 2012 Olympics.

Some planners pointed out that if the Games had been held in New York, the city most likely would have had to cover billions of dollars in cost overruns. It also would have been stuck with many underused sports facilities, including the stadium.

"It's ironic that the Hudson Yards was born out of the loss of the Olympic bid," said Jeffrey S. Katz, who owns three large development sites in the district. "At the end of the day, it turns out to be better for the city that the Olympic stadium is not there. We're building a new, vital part of the central business district.

"Imagine what a big stadium would've been like. It would have dominated the area, and not necessarily in a good way."

The rejuvenation of the neighborhood and the expansion of the business district could be among Mr. Bloomberg's most enduring legacies, achieving a goal that eluded Mayors Edward I. Koch, David N. Dinkins and Rudolph W. Giuliani. Each failed to remake this industrial area after the shipping piers disappeared and the garment district withered.

Even Mr. Bloomberg, who allowed that he "hates to lose," said that in retrospect, the failure of the Olympic bid may have been a blessing for the city.

"Given what happened to the economy, it would've been tough to raise all the money," Mr. Bloomberg said in an interview.

But, he added, his administration pushed ahead with many of the projects and land-use changes that were contained in the Olympic proposal, not just on the Far West Side, but in other parts of the city as well.

"We thought the Olympics would be the catalyst to get a lot of things that many people thought the city needed," he said. "In fact, many got done" anyway.

From the day he took office in 2002, Mr. Bloomberg made the Olympics, as well as the redevelopment of the Far West Side, a signature initiative.

The proposal's chief architect, Daniel L. Doctoroff, a former deputy mayor under Mr. Bloomberg, combined a series of new or refurbished sports facilities across the five boroughs with plans for the redevelopment of waterfront industrial areas.

The rezoning of the West Side for commercial towers was necessary for New York's survival

as an international center of finance, media and communications, Mr. Doctoroff and others argued, because Manhattan was running out of room for development.

But the Olympic plan was also tied to an unpopular proposal for a \$2 billion stadium and an expanded convention center nearby.

While Mr. Bloomberg lost the Olympic bid, he won the rezoning effort in 2005, with plans for up to 24 million square feet of office space and more than 13,000 apartments.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority selected the Related Companies to develop 12 commercial and residential towers, a park and a cultural center over the rail yards between 10th and 12th Avenues, from 30th to 33rd Streets.

Since then, the Bloomberg administration has invested heavily on the Far West Side, including \$3 billion in bonds for the subway extension, new parks and the boulevard between 10th and 11th Avenues, a remnant of the Olympic plan.

The administration has had to tap into the city budget to cover interest payments on the bonds. That cost will be \$557 million by 2015, officials said.

The view from the roof of the Ohm, a 34-story rental building that opened in 2010 at 30th Street and 11th Avenue and has attracted tenants who work in the fashion and media industries, offers a sense of how much things have changed on the Far West Side.

There are residential towers on the northern border, along 42nd Street; new hotels and apartment buildings pushing westward from Eighth Avenue; and new residential towers marching northward along the [High Line](#), the elevated park in Chelsea.

A major developer, Avalon Bay, is about to begin construction of its largest residential complex, with 700 rental apartments and a 30-story tower, at 11th Avenue and 29th Street.

In the next month or so, Related will begin work on a 32-story rental building, with 400 apartments, opposite the proposed Coach building.

The Gotham Organization just broke ground on a \$520 million residential complex on a block bounded by 44th and 45th Streets, between 10th and 11th Avenues. It will contain 1,232 apartments, including 682 units for poor and moderate-income families, mandated by the Hudson Yards rezoning.

Commercial development has progressed more slowly because of the area's lack of public

transportation, its untested location and the costly decks that must be built over the railroad tracks.

Even so, Related, Brookfield Properties, Sherwood Equities and other developers at Hudson Yards said they were optimistic that the first set of commercial buildings was only a few years off, especially with the subway extension set to open in 2013.

Mitchell L. Moss, director of New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management, said the development underscored how the city was better off with the Olympic plan but without the event itself.

"We've created the opportunity for new housing, new commercial space and an entirely new recreational corridor," Mr. Moss, author of the new report "How New York City Won the Olympics," said in an interview. "In light of how quickly the Far West Side developed, we've done better without the Olympics than anyone would have anticipated."