



EXTREME MAKEOVERS

# Chelsea's Sleeping Giant Remade as Luxury Condos with 14-foot Ceilings

Monday, November 14, 2011, by Kelsey Keith

The view north to the Midtown skyline.



Back in the post-crash days of '09, a rumor hit the 'wire that the Art Deco **Ralph Walker**-designed **Verizon building** on West 18th Street near 7th Avenue was bought by a developer for a future condo conversion. (Background check: Walker is the old-school New York architect behind 1 Wall Street and the Barclay-Vesey Building; **Frank Lloyd Wright** was a fan.) DOF records illuminated a few juicy details, including a sale price of \$25 million and the fact that Verizon would stay on as a tenant, but no confirmation was forthcoming via concerning parties. Two years have passed and now, not to say we told you so, but we told you so!



Original silver nickel detail on the entrance to Ralph Walker's 1929 building

The salient facts: developers Michael Stern and Elliott Joseph bought space in the 1929 skyscraper for a song in 2009, in the interest of carving out **55 luxury condos** on the 9th floor and up. Verizon will maintain use of the first eight floors as office space with a separate entrance on West 17th Street. Despite its age and architectural pedigree, the building is not landmarked, so while the development team and project architects Cetra/Ruddy (not Gensler, as initially reported) are taking meticulous care to restore the aesthetics of the Walker original, they are also at liberty to make changes.

Since we're talking luxury apartments, that translates to new, ten-foot windows punched in the facade, a **four-story penthouse extension** on the roof, and reconfigured egress with the stairwells moved from the four corners to the center of the structure, allowing floorplans that capitalize on double-exposure views. One of the more remarkable features is its lofty ceiling heights—since each floor is nearly **15' tall**, the whole building looms over its neighbors, affording gobsmacking panoramic views to the south, west and north. Take our word for it: we got a very early sneak preview of the gutted upper floors last week and the overall effect is one of dizzying dissonance, from the exterior (a beautifully-detailed but relatively-under-the-radar setback tower) to the interior, a behemoth smack dab in the middle of Chelsea.



Archival image.



An apartment view south to Lower Manhattan and the New York Harbor.

**Bonus round:** Over the weekend, a tipster happened to send in this shot of the under-construction penthouse floors and asked about renderings. We hear those will be circulated in the spring, when sales launch for the 55 units, [marketed by CORE](#).