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A Hell's Kitchen Post Office With Condos on Top



The Sorting House condominium will include 30 units at the Radio City Station post office. Credit: Hilary Swift for The New York Times

Luxury condominiums that have been rising across the city often replace longtime fixtures of the landscape, like theaters and hospitals, even bowling alleys. In other cases, churches, telephone buildings and warehouses have been salvaged and converted into apartments.

The reality at the Sorting House, a 30-unit condo project on the site of a post office called Radio City Station in Hell's Kitchen, is more nuanced.

Developed by the Cadence Property Group, the condo, at 318 West 52nd Street, will take over only some of the post office, so customers can continue to mail letters and packages from the location.

“One approach was to pretend we are not on top of a post office; the other was to embrace it,” said Howard Glatzer, the president of Cadence, which was founded in 2014. “Every once in a while, with a nod and a wink, we reference the post office.”

These references, besides the building’s name, will include a grid of gold-metal mailboxes in the lobby. Instead of being hidden behind a wall, as they are in many buildings, the functional mailboxes will be visible from the sidewalk. And the developer will use vintage post-office boxes, from an actual post office, Mr. Glatzer said.

Though the Sorting House won’t raze the Radio City Station, a red-brick edifice from 1926 with three stories, it will alter its shape. Under the terms of the development deal, Cadence controls the third floor, which it will demolish and then replace. The developer will also build two stories above that will blend in with the lower floors. The condo sits inside the Special Clinton District, which restricts heights.

The condo’s lobby, meanwhile, is being carved out of part of the post office’s lobby. Aluminum elements will distinguish its facade from its neighbor’s, so no one walks inside expecting to pick up a package. Other changes will be less noticeable. Cadence is replacing freight elevators for the post office with quieter versions.

Longer-term issues have also been considered. For example, if the United States Postal Service decided to sell its remaining floors, Mr. Glatzer said, he would have first dibs and would likely buy them to install more apartments. In the meantime, the Postal Service cannot lease the space, which is near Times Square, to certain businesses, including tattoo parlors and pornography shops, he said.



A rendering of the finished project. CreditWordsearch



The building as it appears today. CreditHilary Swift for The New York Times

Upstairs at the Sorting House, apartments will range from studios to three-bedrooms and feature casement windows, Italian marble counters and white-oak vanities; 28 of the 30 units will have private outdoor space. There will also be a common roof deck.

Average per-square-foot prices are about \$1,800, with units listed at \$1 million to \$3 million. The condo had three accepted offers in late October, Mr. Glatzer said. The average sale price per square foot in the 10019 ZIP code, which covers the neighborhood, was about \$1,540 in the second quarter, according to the appraisal firm Miller Samuel.

Cadence bought the unusual site for \$3.9 million in July 2014, according to city finance records, and is spending another \$42 million on the condo project, which is expected to be completed by 2017.

Radio City Station is not the first postal facility in New York to welcome developers. The [Bronx](#) General Post Office on the Grand Concourse and East 149th Street is being remade as a shopping and dining destination by Youngwoo & Associates. Floors will be added to the roof, while parts of that facility will also continue to operate as a post office, including its lobby, which is ringed with murals showing farmers and other workers.

That artistic legacy and the post office's historic functions are worth preserving, said Thaddeus Briner, the founding principal of [Architecture Outfit](#), which designed the Sorting House. "I'm sure people can disparage the post office pretty easily," he said. "But the post office has allowed a lot of wonderful things to happen in this country. And it still does."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/realestate/a-hells-kitchen-post-office-with-condos-on-top.html?ref=realestate&r=0>