Development Ahead Under Elevated Trains?

By Rayna Katz | New York

NEW YORK CITY—The Design Trust for Public Space—the nonprofit that claims to have jumpstarted the High Line—has announced that it will work with the city’s Department of Transportation to revive and animate public spaces below the city’s elevated transit infrastructure.

Its Under the Elevated: Reclaiming Space, Connecting Communities campaign will engage community leaders, planners, architects, artists, and cultural organizations to develop strategies to maximize the function, use, and spatial qualities of the millions of square feet of space underneath New York City’s bridges, and elevated highways, subways, and rail lines, according to the announcement.

“The sheer quantity of spaces that lie right before our eyes, unnoticed, as we New Yorkers go about our business, is staggering,” says Susan Chin, executive director, in the announcement.

“NYC has nearly 700 miles of elevated infrastructure, with over 100 million square feet of underserved space beneath. When you look at the impact the mile-and-a-half-long High Line has created, and then consider the potential of these spaces in neighborhoods across the five boroughs, you understand the magnitude of this undertaking.”

Under the Elevated will produce design guidelines as well as programming and policy recommendations that will inform the transformation of spaces citywide, the announcement asserts.

Adds Wendy Feuer, assistant commissioner for Urban Design & Art at DOT, in the announcement, “We see an opportunity to increase the functionality of these spaces and identify permanent or temporary uses that will enliven the public realm of neighboring communities. For example, we are pleased that the Chinatown Partnership will be a collaborator on this project,” she says. “By working with the Design Trust to develop guidelines for the design and use of these spaces, we can look forward to well-thought-out recommendations.”

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Rayna Katz is a seasoned business journalist whose extensive experience includes coverage of the lodging sector. She was most recently content director for a major business-to-business publisher, overseeing four publications.

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