

# Visionary Sustainable Building Design and the 21st Century Work Place

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By Jordan Teicher

**To create cutting-edge workplaces, developers are taking on the mantle of sustainable building design and elevating the human experience.**

The \$3.1-billion One Vanderbilt commercial office tower that will rise to an expected 1,401 ft. across the street from Grand Central Terminal will be unmistakable on the map of Midtown, Manhattan — and likely far beyond. Led by SL Green Realty as owner and developer and Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates as architect, the skyscraper seeks to raise the global standard on sustainable design and construction.

“Health is the bridge that links a broader environmental sensitivity to individual well-being. That bridge is a very important one as an influence, a motivator, to obtain a sustainable building,” said Jamie Von Kelmperer, president and design principal at Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates.

Once completed, it’s expected to not only pull corporate talent to New York City, but also to serve as a global model for sustainable commercial real estate.

“This project puts New York squarely where it should be, at the forefront of high-rise building innovation,” Von Kelmperer said.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SL GREEN

**Environmentally innovative**  
One Vanderbilt is on track to achieve the highest level of certification from Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Among a slew of sustainable features, the building will include ultra-high efficiency restroom fixtures designed to reduce water consumption by 40 percent and a 50,000-gallon tank that will capture rainwater for reuse in mechanical systems and irrigation. Structural steel and

concrete, meanwhile, will contain recycled content, which will reduce reliance on raw materials.

“One Vanderbilt is the epitome of the 21st century workplace. Its location, openness, natural light and revitalizing air, which will help achieve a LEED certification, will also create a stimulating environment for tenants to excel every day,” said Elizabeth Majkowsky, SL Green’s director of sustainability and senior vice president of operations.

Implementing renewable materials and systems is just one piece of the sustainability puzzle. Achieving a low carbon footprint also means positioning buildings in the urban landscape to maximize density and facilitate access to public transportation.

“In the design of a major project like One Vanderbilt, we’re not just looking at one building, we’re looking at the whole system,” Von Kelmperer said. “Located in the city’s premier business district

with unrivaled access to Grand Central Terminal, One Vanderbilt will provide unmatched convenience, including access to the Long Island Rail Road and the creation of a pedestrian plaza.”

## Employee friendly

Top-notch design requires thinking about employee health as much as environmental health. That’s why the One Vanderbilt team is also pursuing the highest level of WELL Compliance certification.

“To bring the best talent into the middle of a city, it’s got to not just be a place where you can go to the best plays or the best restaurants, it’s also got to be a place where you can give employees good air, good light and a quiet and healthy workplace,” Von Kelmperer said.

One Vanderbilt is designed to fulfill WELL’s guidelines. The building will feature floor-to-ceiling windows, biophilic design elements and healthy entrance features to minimize pollutants. It will also use low-VOC materials, which reduce the risk of short- and long-term adverse health effects of harmful chemicals.

WELL is a relatively new standard that’s growing in popularity, one that Majkowsky believes forward-thinking developers need to strongly consider.

“We felt that it was critical to design a building where people are going to want to work for decades to come,” said Steven Durels, SL Green’s director of leasing and real property. “From the base of the building to the top, One Vanderbilt provides its tenants an unsurpassed professional and personal quality of life.” ■