



New York Times

Condé Nast

Bank of America Tower

Chrysler Building

Empire State Building

23rd–26th Streets

THE GREAT SPIRES

The *New York Times* headquarters on Eighth Avenue between 40th and 41st Streets was designed by Renzo Piano and completed in 2007. It was considered to be such an important piece of architecture that photographer Annie Leibovitz produced a photo-documentary of its construction, inspired by Margaret Bourke-White, who had photographed the Chrysler Building as it was being built, and Lewis W. Hine, who documented construction of the Empire State Building. The façade of the building is a curtain of ceramic rods that rises from street level to the roof; together the rods form an unending series of vertical slats that reduces energy costs by helping to block direct sunlight. The

exterior cladding also encourages climbers: at least three men have been arrested trying to summit the building. The most distinctive element that can be seen from the High Line is the 1,000-foot mast on the roof; it contains radiometers that gather and transmit solar data to a computer system that in turn controls the window shades throughout the building.

The Bank of America Tower at One Bryant Park is the first skyscraper designed to achieve a Platinum LEED rating from the U.S. Green Building Council; it was decreed the greenest building in Manhattan by the New York Academy of Sciences. Its 255-foot ornamental spire consists of 368 LED floodlights and was designed to create a performance of light that would engage

with, and play off of, the spires of other tall skyscrapers around town, both near and far. When the lights first went on a few days after Christmas in 2010 the *New York Post* cheered that “the City That Never Sleeps has a new reason to stay up at night.”

Completed in 2000, the Condé Nast building in Times Square is also considered a green building and was recognized by the American Institute of Architects for its use of solar and fuel-cell technology. Its 300-foot mast is used to support television and radio broadcasters, and at night it joins the Bank of America spire in a beautiful display of light and color.

Also visible from various points along the High Line is the Chrysler Building, an Art Deco

gem completed in 1930 when the elevated railroad that became the High Line was still in the planning stages. At that time, as Kate Ascher describes in her book *The Heights*, architects competed fiercely for the status of highest building in New York. The competition was so serious in the 1920s that “the spire of the Chrysler Building was constructed in secret and then raised into place from within the building to ensure that the tower would be able to claim the ‘world’s tallest title’” from a competitor downtown. For a short time it was the tallest building in the world, but in 1931 the Empire State Building — visible and always inspiring from many places along the High Line — opened for business, eclipsing it.