

Foster + Partners unveils design for boathouse for Row New York

Foster + Partners has unveiled its design for a new boathouse for Row New York, a non-profit organisation based in New York City focused on empowering youth through the sport of rowing.



All images courtesy of Foster + Partners.

The new boathouse, located in Sherman Creek Park on the Harlem River in New York City, will expand Row New York's free and low-cost programmes that teach young people in under-resourced communities the sport of competitive rowing, while also assisting them with their education to prepare them for higher education and a path to college.

Foster + Partners' project seeks to transform the lives of people in the local community, giving young people a sense of self-confidence and purpose, inspiring them to achieve their full potential.

The expansion will enable Row New York to substantially increase its reach, accommodating up to five times as many students, including those with physical and cognitive disabilities and bringing all its activities under one roof for the first time.

"In envisioning a design for a boathouse that will serve a diverse population and be a resource to the community at large, I wanted to create a building that was both functional and accessible, but also one that responded to the Hudson River's long history as a busy transportation hub," said Norman Foster, founder and executive chairman of Foster + Partners.

"This timber boathouse will fit naturally into the landscape of the riverfront and will transform this stretch of the Harlem River

into a lively gathering place for people from all communities."

"At the beginning of the 20th century, the river was dotted with many timber boathouses along its banks. The new Harlem Boathouse recalls this tradition with a simple rectilinear structure made entirely from wood," said Foster + Partners.



All images courtesy of Foster + Partners.

The new building is fully accessible – a generous plaza foregrounds the building, from where a gentle folding ramp extends to the upper and lower levels of the building. The lower level contains an expanded storage for boats, which is designed to withstand severe flooding events, while the upper level features a large multi-purpose hall alongside changing rooms and classrooms for after school programmes.

This expansive flowing space on the upper level opens onto a wide terrace on the building's eastern edge, looking onto the river – framing views of early morning sunrise as the rowers begin the first sessions.

The new 149m² facility will incorporate boat storage, fitness, and academic functions in one building on a new site, creating an integrated community space that uses rowing as a facilitator for several other social activities – from an outdoor cinema to financial literacy classes.

The boathouse is shaded by a large folding timber canopy that sails over the structure, cantilevering over the plaza and terrace and providing shelter from the sun. Its distinctive timber lattice is a fusion of engineering and design, providing soft, dappled shade to the flexible multipurpose waterfront open space – a landscaped area designed for informal leisure activities as well as community events and performances.

The boathouse will transform this stretch of the Harlem River into an arena at the heart of the community, furthering the wider social and educational aims of Row New York.

Foster + Partners will work with Bade Stageberg Cox as the architects of record.

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