

THE VILLAGER

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New Hudson Yards station is on another level

By Lenore Skenazy



The stylish, glass-canopied entrance to the Hudson Yards No. 7 train station. Photos by Vincent LaFaro

Do yourself — and your soul — a favor. Hop on the 7 train and go to the last stop in Manhattan, the brand-spanking-new one: 34th St. Hudson Yards.

You will emerge into the station and, I guarantee you, grin. Everyone does. I spent Sunday, opening day, just watching people get off the train and smile like they'd landed in Disney World.

It's not just that the place is so new and big and bright. It's not just the amazing "inclinators" — an elevator

that glides up and down an incline, like something out of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." It's not even the fact that there's no gum on the floor, or trash on the tracks. I didn't even see a rat — which was kind of disorienting. Like, "Am I still in New York?"

But that's the point: This is very much New York. And maybe the optimism it engenders is the fact that our city (and state) made something this magnificent happen.

You see, without exactly articulating it, a troubling notion had taken root in the back of my mind, and possibly yours, that New York's civic glory days were over. Yes, we could build the Freedom Tower, but look how long it took. Look at how different it ended up from the original design.



The subway station's spacious interior almost resembles an airport more than a subway station.

And yes, we built two baseball stadiums recently, but those were...baseball stadiums.

And then suddenly the M.T.A. unveils a transit hub that opens up a whole swath of previously no-man's-land Manhattan, like the Golden Spike opening up the Wild West. And it does this with a station as uplifting as a cathedral.

"It's a point for urban equality," said Alex Restrepo, an academic advisor at LaGuardia Community College, taking an opening day stroll through the newness.

"It's also built on a usable scale," added Michael Rohdin, an administrator of undergraduate studies at John Jay College. Unlike, say, the 72nd and Broadway station — an express stop with just enough platform space for a ballerina to slide past a supermodel, if neither of them has eaten breakfast — the Hudson Yards stop is vast. The platform is wide, but it almost feels as if the stairways are wider still.

"And there are many entrances between the station and the mezzanine, so there won't be so many choke points," piped up Leo Wagner, a 14-year-old train buff visiting with his mom from Washington, D.C.



A mosaic-tile ceiling adds to the station's attractiveness.

The train buffs were out in force, of course, all of them ecstatic.

"I actually got chills — and not just because of the air conditioning," said 17-year-old Jovan Griffith, a senior at Northeastern Academy in Inwood, taking photos. (He was right — the AC was working on the platform. Amazing!)

"I like the design, the walls, the lighting — everything," said an equally effusive Vincent LaFaro, a CVS customer service rep from Brooklyn. His friend Veniece Campbell had

come in from Yonkers to exult in the new station.

"It's historic!" she said, promising she'll be back soon.

Then again, she has to be. She's a train operator, and on Thursday her run starts at that station.

Outside on one of the new benches facing the new grass that looks about as natural as a Starbucks in the Sahara, retired Domino Sugar worker Robert Shelton sat basking in the sun, and pride.

"My daughter's an electrician," he said. "She helped to construct this."

This is a daughter who went to electrician school only after her parents begged the administration to let her in. It was a Downtown Brooklyn trade school that only accepted certain students.

“You had to have been on welfare, an ex-offender or a drug addict to go to the school,” Shelton explained. His daughter wasn’t any of those, but that’s the school her family had heard about in the Roosevelt Houses, and that’s where she wanted to go. Her parents did too.

“So we took off from work and fought for her to go to school there,” recalled Shelton. “We said, ‘We pay taxes. Let her in.’” And the school did.

Now, 30-something years later, she’s worked on everything from Bloomberg headquarters to the city’s newest gem.

“I am so happy to be here today,” said her dad.

See? This station is going to make a lot of us happy for a long time.

Skenazy is a keynote speaker and the author and founder of the book and blog “Free-Range Kids”