

World Trade Center reclaims city's skyline

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NEW YORK — It happened just like that.

Two steel beams were lowered from a crane, fastened into place and the World Trade Center all of a sudden had reclaimed its status as king of the New York City skyline.

The event took only a few minutes, but it was more than a decade in the making with the whole world watching.

Monday afternoon, for the first time since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, another milestone was reached in the recovery from that great tragedy as the tower — simply named 1 World Trade Center — rose to 1,271 feet to surpass the iconic Empire State Building.

As the crane released the beam, a round of applause broke out on the 100th floor where it was installed. Cheers also reigned in the galley assembled on the 71st floor where members of the international media and the development group watched on a live video feed overlooking the entire city.

“We are well on our way to becoming the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere,” said Scott Rechler, board member of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns the site.

He touted the thousands of construction jobs created by the project, which is helping to revitalize the local economy and change the shape of lower Manhattan.

“It will anchor lower Manhattan and its rebirth for many generations to come,” said Patrick Foye, the authority’s executive director.

The resurrection of lower Manhattan is already well underway, bustling with activity during all hours of the day.

When it was the pinnacle of American and global finance in the days of the Twin Towers, lower Manhattan all but shut down by 5 p.m.

Today, the neighborhood has become something of a “Times Square South,” full of tourists, retail, new apartment complexes and, yes, even a thriving nightlife — not to mention the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Now, on places like Stone Street — a cobblestone side road loaded with bars and restaurants — the opening bell rings at 5 p.m.

Before the Sept. 11 attacks, the center's Twin Towers were home to such financial powerhouses as Morgan Stanley and Cantor Fitzgerald. The new tenants are an eclectic mix.