



Looking at Lexington

Because Lexington Avenue is such an important artery on the Upper East Side, it is surprising that very little of it is included in the designated historic district.

ARCHITECTURALLY AND FUNCTIONALLY, THE BUILDINGS ON Lexington are much like those on Madison Avenue, which is part of the district from 62nd to 77th Streets. The sense of place on both avenues is set by the collections of four- and five-story 19th century row houses, with shops on the first and often the second floors, and apartments above. Rows of these small buildings are punctuated by larger apartment buildings, which also feature shops on their ground floors, and the occasional distinguished institutional building.

The stores on Lexington still maintain a neighborhood feel and function, with a pet shop here, a framer there, in addition to classy small boutiques and gift shops. Several have beautifully restored historic features, and on others

such detailing peeks out over later additions, just waiting to be rediscovered. Even the plainest shop fronts contribute to the character of the avenue with small display windows and many recessed doorways. Much of the signage, on the other hand, detracts from the ensemble and is, in fact, in violation of building department and zoning regulations.

Friends has been concerned about retaining the special character of Lexington Avenue since the early 1980s when we asked the Department of City Planning to rezone the avenue contextually. That request was part of Friends' larger effort to protect the neighborhood by banning "sliver" buildings and down zoning the mid-blocks to the low-rise R8B. Our success on all three fronts, plus the designation

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LEXINGTON AVENUE ...

of the Upper East Side Historic District in 1981, has contributed significantly to maintaining this community's varied but distinctive sense of place, while encouraging appropriate new development.

With a massive new mixed-use high rise planned for the former Alexander's site at 59th Street, change may be coming to Lexington Avenue once again. How to manage that change in order to retain the best characteristics of the Avenue will be a challenge for Friends and other advocates. An extension of the historic district to include more of Lexington is a possibility that Friends will be studying and surveying throughout the summer and fall.

An examination of the district boundaries will be the first step. The western edge of the Upper East Side Historic District is the straight edge of Fifth Avenue. The eastern edge, however, is irregular, taking in buildings on the side streets but stopping short of Lexington Avenue. Exceptions are where the district includes the 67th Street Armory and Hunter College's historic buildings. Only in the blocks between 69th and 71st Streets are both sides of Lexington included in the district where it stretches east to include two particularly distinguished row house blocks. Then, at Lexington and 73rd Street, the district also takes in a striking apartment building of 1899 by Charles Stegmayer. Fortunately, on the east side of the avenue, there are also a number of individually designated landmarks, including the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer (church, Bertram Goodhue: 1914-1918), the apartment buildings at 66th and 67th Streets, and, on 67th Street, Mt. Sinai Dispensary (Buchman & Deisler: 1889-90), the 28th Precinct Station House (Nathaniel D. Bush: 1887), the New York City Fire Department Headquarters (Napoleon Le Brun & Sons: 1886), and Park East Synagogue (Schneider & Herter: 1889-90).

Readers concerned about Lexington Avenue are invited to join the survey team. We're pulling out our clipboards, sharpening our pencils, and loading our instant cameras. Join us!



This single building at 73rd Street is the northernmost building on Lexington in the Upper East Side Historic District.



Lexington Avenue has a mixture of fine apartment buildings and lines of row houses. This block, just south of the district between 64th and 65th Streets, is not in the historic district. These buildings are largely intact, although the row houses have some inappropriate storefront alterations.

LEXINGTON AVENUE VIEWS



Many blocks on Lexington are lined with row houses, whose cornices and window openings create a regular pattern that helps to create the streetscape. None of these features are protected. The Barbizon Hotel, in the background, is also unprotected.



This is one of the few blocks on the east side of Lexington that is designated (between 68th and 69th Streets).



STEVEN TUCKER

"The Parge House," (alterations by Sterner: 1922) at 866 Lexington Avenue. Included on Friends' list of *The 11 Most Endangered Places*, this is one of the most distinctive and picturesque homes on the Upper East Side. Because the Parge House remains unprotected, its fragile and unusual detail could be lost.



This is one of a series of restored, but unprotected storefronts in the apartment building at 64th Street. There is a similar series of stores, although they are not restored, just south of this building.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As co-chair of our block association, spring and summer evoke special feelings. This spring, I was walking our block looking at winter's disrepair and was reminded of the change and yet the sameness of our Lexington Avenue neighborhood. We moved to 73rd Street and Lexington Avenue in 1972. There were many small shops—some “mom and pop” such as a newsstand, drug store, and an eyeglass store. Most of the apartment buildings had doctor's offices on the ground floors. There were also seamstresses and cleaners and small local restaurants—we had a wonderful Greek one. The scale is low and the streets are sunny. Its variety makes it interesting and most blocks are anchored by apartment buildings on the corners. Lexington Avenue needs a historic district to preserve and record the uniqueness of belonging to a very special pocket of New York City.

As I walked the block the man who has been planting the tree pits and sprucing up the tree guards stopped to say “hello.” As we chatted he said, “Can you believe it's 30 years I've been doing this block—that was even before I was married and had three kids.” As the world races by it's wonderful to feel that some time next year we again will be enjoying the flowers and the trees and following the same ritual.


ANNE MILLARD, PRESIDENT

Our New Board Members

SHARON S. DAVIS currently serves on the board of The Fresh Air Fund (as its president), Boscobel Restoration and the Brearley School. She and her family live on the Upper East Side in a town house they lovingly re-stored; it was one of the highlights of Friends' House and Garden Tour in 1995.

FATHER JOHN KAMAS was born on East 74th Street, grew up in this neighborhood, and has served as the Pastor of the Jean Baptiste Church since 1988. When he first took over, his immediate challenge was the need to restore—both inside and out—a landmark building at a time when his church was bankrupt. Through a miracle (some call it Section 74-7II of the Zoning Resolution), he

was able to bring “renewed splendor to the community,” as cited in Friends' Restoration Award at our Tenth Annual Meeting in 1993.

JULIA WIDDOWSON lives with her husband and two daughters on the Upper East Side, but is currently spending more time in Dutchess County where she is restoring her Greek Revival house. Her interests are architectural preservation, land conservation, agriculture and decorative arts. She serves on the boards of the Eastern New York chapter of The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land and the American Friends of the Musee des Arts Decoratifs. She has her Master's in the History of Decorative Art from Parsons School of Design/Cooper Hewitt Museum.

LEND YOUR SUPPORT TO FRIENDS

Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Send your contribution to Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, 20 East 69th St., 4B, New York, NY 10021.

\$25 Student/Senior
\$35 Individual
\$50 Family
\$100 Supporting
\$250 Patron
\$500 Best Friend
\$1000 and up Landmark

A Splintering Remnant of Old Yorkville

Of all of the emails and phone calls that Friends receives asking for information on particular buildings, the one most asked about is the “little wooden house” at 160 East 92nd Street (near Lexington Avenue). The narrow structure is squeezed into its site, and looking sad and rundown. It is a city landmark and therefore protected from demolition and inappropriate alterations, but currently suffers from pitiless neglect. The plight of this little wooden house highlights the fact that even designated buildings can be at risk. Although the Landmarks Preservation Commission can penalize owners for violations of the regulatory process, the law does not provide sanctions for owners who neglect their buildings. Through “demolition by neglect,” absent or malicious owners can still circumvent Landmarks’ regulations.

Built between 1852–1853, the house is one of the oldest of the few intact 19th century wood-frame structures in all of Manhattan, and particularly rare north of Greenwich Village. The Landmarks Preservation Commission describes it as a “rare surviving remnant of the early years of the village of Yorkville, the house...is a two and a half story vernacular clapboard dwelling that displays elements of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles.” One of the building’s most distinguished features is the one-story porch with four wooden fluted Corinthian columns. The architect was probably Albro Howell, a carpenter-builder who lived next door.

Wood frame houses are so rare because they were susceptible to fire and were often demolished and re-



placed with larger masonry buildings. As early as 1761, the city prohibited the building of wooden structures in dense urban areas and in 1887 these prohibitions were extended to 155th Street. Until then, most of the houses in Yorkville were wood-frame construction. Due to the proximity of industries and public transportation, this area was not favored by the wealthy, who generally built more expensive masonry buildings. There are three additional extant wooden houses in Yorkville, at 120 and 122 East 92nd Street and 128 East 93rd Street.

The house was first owned by Robert Hebbard and then by a number of families who lived in it. It was bought in 1914 by Willard Straight and his wife, Dorthy Payne Whitney, who housed their staff in it until 1942 when it was sold to jewelry designer Jean Schlumberger. It was designated a City Landmark in 1988, amidst plans by the 92nd Street Y to expand and thereby demolish the house.

Friends has been watching its declining state for some time. It is owned by an Italian businessman and has been vacant for many years. Even in 1987, the 92nd Street Y noted that “the building has largely been unoccupied in recent years.” Today, the building is still vacant and neighbors often notice it has standing water on the flat roof of its rear addition. The paint is peeling, leaving the wood structure vulnerable to rot and infestation. It is puzzling to say the least that a splendid house in such a desirable neighborhood could be so neglected. Friends will be working to solve this mystery in the upcoming months.

Welcome to Young FRIENDS!

If you like buildings, you are sure to enjoy this magazine. In it, you will find articles, craft ideas and all sorts of interesting information about the terrific buildings you see every day, right on your own block.

This issue is dedicated to row houses.

BY JANE COWAN

Have you ever seen a row house? If you live in New York, Young Friends bets you have!

If you want to know more about row houses, sing this song:

R **o** **w** **H** **o** **u** **s** **e** **i** **n** **t** **h** **e** **C** **i** **t** **y**

(Sing to the tune of "How Much is that Doggie in the Window?")

Just what is a row house in the city?
That answer I'd really like to know.
They're lined up so neat and look so pretty;
I see them wherever I go.

A row house is a house that's in the city.
Attached to its neighbors ergo,
In a row it sits, is that not witty?
You can see why they are called so.

On the Upper East Side they are quite common.
They march up and down every block.
There are so many styles on 'em,
Your socks right off they will knock.

Sometimes they are built out of brownstone,
And other times bricks can be used.
You might think they're all just a clone;
Their facades must be slowly perused.

Row houses can be old or can be new.
Around here they're mainly quite old.
A hundred years ago or more was when they grew,
New York's known for them so it's been told.

Next time you take a walk down the street,
Look around and see what's standing there.
Of all the row houses you will meet,
Find your favorite, but don't ever stare!

Design Your Own Row House

It's easy to be inspired by all the different row houses on the Upper East Side. Walking around and enjoying the architecture brought out the creative juices in Young Friends and made us think, 'Why not design one ourselves?' Why not indeed!

What you will need:



SMALL BROWN PAPER BAG (SUCH AS A LUNCH BAG)
CONSTRUCTION PAPER • CRAYONS • COLORED PENCILS
OR MAGIC MARKERS • GLUE • SCISSORS • PENCIL

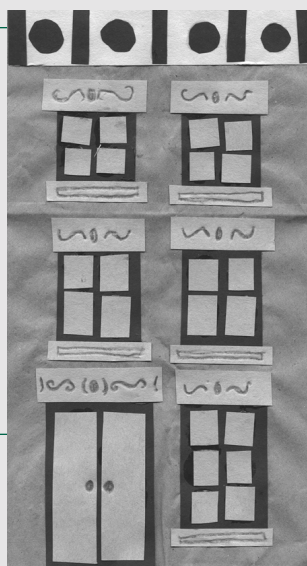


1 Decide how many floors your row house will have. Cut the construction paper into rectangles to represent the windows and door. Remember to make the door slightly larger than the windows! Glue the windows and door onto the paper bag, which should be laying flat. Be sure to put the top of the building at the end of the bag that opens.

2 Cut a cornice. The cornice is the decorative element that goes across the top of the building. It sticks out a little, so it also helps protect the building from rain. It's a building umbrella! To make your cornice, just cut a rectangle that stretches across the width of the paper bag. Glue it into place.



3 Cut out long thin rectangles for the lintels and sills. (Lintels are the horizontal beams that go across the top of a door or a window. A sill goes across the bottom.) Glue them into place.



4 Decorate your cornice with various cut shapes. Be creative!



5 Cut out small rectangles for the different panes, or pieces of glass. Glue them down.

6 Use crayons to draw designs onto the lintels and sills. You can also add a doorknob. Open your paper bag, stand it up, and voila! Instant row house. Make several to create a whole city block.



Modern Architecture Exhibit

Friends presents *Modern Architecture on the Upper East Side: Landmarks of the Future*, **September 20 – January 26, 2002**, at the Gallery of New York School of Interior Design. The exhibition focuses on 22 post-World War II buildings located on Manhattan's Upper East Side that may qualify now or in the future for designation as New York City landmarks, including buildings designed by such prominent architects as Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Harrison & Abramovitz; Gwathmey Siegel, Kohn Pedersen Fox; and Tod Williams Billie Tsien & Associates.



Cinema I and II (Abraham W. Geller Associates and Ben Schlanger: 1962) at 1001 Third Avenue is one of the 22 buildings featured in the exhibit.

Friends seeks—through this photographic exhibition—to foster greater appreciation of modern

architecture and to encourage consideration of the buildings identified as potential New York City landmarks. This is of particular significance because the buildings identified are not within the City's already protected historic districts. The exhibition is supported by a

generous grant from the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc.; by the New York School of Interior Design; and, in part, with funds from the East Manhattan Chamber of Commerce.

Modern Architecture Exhibit Events

Preserving the Moderns: The Upper East Side 1945-1996

Lecture by Matthew Postal

October 2, 2001 at 6:00 p.m.

Architectural historian Matthew Postal will discuss the introduction and development of modern architecture on the Upper East Side as illustrated by the 22 buildings in the exhibition.

Walking Tours

with Matthew Postal

October 13, 2001 at 11:00 a.m.

October 27, 2001 at 11:00 a.m.

Visit the 22 buildings with an architectural historian. Each tour will cover half of the buildings.

Modern Architecture Comes of Age: a panel discussion

November 14, 2001 at 6:00 p.m.

- Introduction and overview: Nina Rappaport, DOCOMOMO
- New Interest in Preserving the Moderns
- The Challenges of Preserving the Modern: a case study on an Upper East Side building from both the technical and the advocacy point of view, which will also address issues of authenticity and materials.

CHILDREN'S TOUR

Check your mail for a postcard alerting you to our fun children's tour with Jane Cowan in September 2001.

FRIENDS' ANNUAL BENEFIT

Thursday, October 11, 2001
at 6:30 p.m.

*Two Piano Music with Mike Carney
and Camilla Cloney*

This year we are thrilled that noted performers Mike Carney and Camilla Cloney will entertain us with a two piano performance. Their set list includes Gershwin, Rogers & Hart, Jerome Kern, Stephen Sondheim, Cy Coleman, Irving Berlin, Fats Waller and more! With a cocktail reception and wonderful dinner, this is sure to be an evening to remember.

FRIENDS' LOGO

Have you ever wondered about the origin of Friends' logo? It is a detail from the decorative plaster work found on the "Parge House," located on the southwest corner of 65th Street and Lexington Avenue. The exterior of this 1870 row house, re-designed in the early 1920s by New York architect Frederick J. Sterner, is decorated with elaborate, often whimsical, plaster detail in low relief, modeled on English medieval "parging" (thus the name of the building). The House was included in Friends' 1993 exhibition, *The 11 Most Endangered Properties on the Upper East Side*. Although it is still in good condition, it remains unprotected by Landmarks Laws.

DELANO & ALDRICH WALKING TOUR

Friends hosted a marvelous evening walking tour of the Upper East Side architecture of Delano & Aldrich. The tour was led by Friends' board member Peter Pennoyer, the principal of Peter Pennoyer Architects, who is currently at work with his co-author (and co-guide) Anne Walker on a monograph on the architecture of Delano & Aldrich to be published by W.W. Norton in the spring of 2003.

During the first half of the 20th century, the New York-based firm of Delano & Aldrich, the practicing partnership between William Adams Delano and Chester Homes Aldrich, designed more than 250 buildings, primarily in New York City—on the fashionable Upper East Side—and on Long Island's North Shore. The firm quickly distinguished itself as *the* firm for society's elite and became the period's leading architects for house and clubhouse design, as

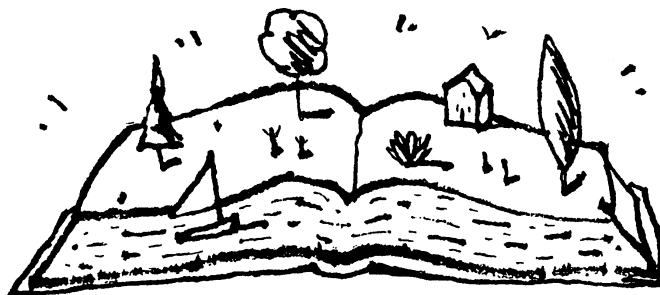
McKim, Mead & White had been a generation earlier. The architectural merit and creative insight of their work earned Delano & Aldrich a place within the ranks of such well established architects as Charles A. Platt and John Russell Pope.



1130 Fifth Avenue, the Willard and Dorothy Whitney Straight House, is an Individual Landmark located in the Carnegie Hill Historic District. It was designed by Delano & Aldrich and built from 1913-1915. It is being converted from a museum to a single family house, and recently received approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission for a major exterior restoration with some sensitive alterations.

With their Upper East Side buildings—clubhouses, mansions, churches and schools, Delano & Aldrich perfected their stripped-down Georgian style, setting a precedent of understated elegance and architectural fluency.

The tour began at the Knickerbocker Club on Fifth Avenue and 62nd Street, and continued up Park Avenue past the Colony and Union Clubs and mansions for Harold I. Pratt and William Douglas Sloane to Carnegie Hill, where the firm designed grand houses for the Willard Straights, George Bakers, R. Fulton Cuttings, and the William Woodwards.



Friends Bookshelf



Glory in Gotham (City & Company Guide, 2001), written by David Dunlap and Joseph Vecchione, is a guide to Manhattan's houses of worship. It is organized by neighborhood, and has maps and photographs of each institution. Each entry includes information on the architecture, the art within and the history of the congregations. There are 19 churches, synagogues, mosques and temples included from the Upper East Side. Each entry reveals the rich variety of architecture and residents of the neighborhood. Highlights from our neighborhood include the largest synagogue in the world, TEMPLE EMANUEL at 65th and 5th Avenue;

ST. NICHOLAS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL, which received the first donation towards its construction from Czar Nicholas II himself (5,000 rubles); "The only house of worship in Manhattan built during the reign of Caesar Augustus," THE TEMPLE OF ISIS AT DENDUR in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Not every house of worship in the neighborhood is included in the guide. Friends found one conspicuously absent, the Manhattan Church of Christ, 48 East 80th Street (Eggers & Higgins: 1967), which is one of the 22 buildings included in the exhibit, *Modern Architecture on the Upper East Side*:

Landmarks of the Future. Even with that exception, this well-written guide is a must for anyone interested in the architectural and cultural history of Manhattan.

Long-time Upper East Side resident and Friends' education docent, Sana Feirsten, has written a wonderful new book,

Naming New York: Manhattan Places & How They Got Their Names (New York University Press: 2001). Through place names, many layers of Manhattan history, from the colonial, African and immigrant heritage, are revealed. While the built environment is often lost and obscured through continual development, the place names often

remain. Some names of interest to Upper East Siders include:

YORK AVENUE: named for the city's most famous World War I hero, Alvin C. York. Residents *beware*, there is a request to Community Board 8 to change the name of York Avenue from 60th Street to 66th Street to Sutton Place North, to increase "cachet and property values."

LEXINGTON AVENUE: Named in 1836 for the Revolutionary War battle of Lexington, Mass.

CHEROKEE PLACE (on the west side of John Jay Park between 77th and 78th Street): named for the Cherokee Club, a democratic clubhouse from the 1880s.

Each month Friends' Preservation Committee reviews all Certificate of Appropriateness applications for both individual landmarks and buildings within the six historic districts on the Upper East Side. A representative of Friends attends the Landmarks Committee of Community Board 8 and testifies to the Landmarks Preservation Commission's (LPC) public hearings. These are the applications we reviewed from September 2000–May 2001. Please call the office (212) 535-2526, if you would like more information on any of these items.

Abbreviations

UESHD: Upper East Side Historic District

MMHD: Metropolitan Museum Historic District

CHHD: Carnegie Hill Historic District

E A S T 6 0 S

125 East 65th St., the China Institute – UESHD
(Charles A. Platt: 1904–05) Install a flagpole and banner.

Friends said: No LPC said: Yes

37 East 68th Street – UESHD
(built 1871, altered by Delano & Aldrich 1913) Construct a rear yard addition.

Friends said: Yes LPC said: Yes

E A S T 7 0 S

1 East 70th St., the Frick Museum – Individual Landmark/ UESHD

(Carrère & Hastings 1913–14) Replace a security booth.

Friends said: No LPC said: Yes

10 East 73rd St. – UESHD
(Altered by Harry Allan Jacobs: 1916) Create an areaway and alter the entrance doors.

Friends said: Yes LPC said: Yes

128 East 74th St. – UESHD
(John G. Prague: 1871–75) Construct a rear yard addition.

Friends said: No LPC said: No decision

35 East 75th St. – UESHD
(Paul Resnick: 1958) Renovation of existing lobby and storefront as shown on plans.

Friends said: No LPC said: No Decision

E A S T 9 0 S

2 East 90th St. – CHHD
(Mayers, Murray & Phillip, Bertram G. Goodhue Associates: 1927–29) Install gates at the Parish House.

Friends Said: No LPC said: No Decision

47 East 91st St. – CHHD
(Lusby Simpson: 1950–51) Construct a new building and alter the existing building (design revised from previous application).

Friends said: Yes LPC said: No decision

56 East 93rd St. – Individual Landmark/ CHHD
(Walker & Gillette: 1930–31)

Construct a two-story rooftop addition, two rear yard additions and alter the entrance doors.

Friends said: No LPC said: Yes with modifications

12 East 94th St. – CHHD
(George B. de Gersdorff: 1919–20) Construct a rear yard addition.

Friends said: Yes LPC said: No decision

F I F T H A V E N U E

950 Fifth Ave. – UESHD
(J.E.R. Carpenter: 1926) Replace windows on the eighth and ninth floors.

Friends said: No LPC said: No decision

1000 Fifth Ave. – MMHD/ Individual Landmark
(Vaux and Mould, R.M. Hunt, McKim, Mead & White and others: 1864–1990) Establish a master plan governing the construction of rooftop additions, alterations to a driveway and the addition to doors on the Fifth Avenue façade.

Friends said: Yes LPC said: Yes

1071 Fifth Ave., the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum – UESHD/ Individual Landmark
(Frank Lloyd Wright: 1956–59) Construct a kiosk in front of the museum.

Friends said: No LPC said: Yes

1115 Fifth Ave. – CHHD
(J.E.R. Carpenter: 1926) Construct a rooftop addition, modify a chimney and install a railing.

Friends said: Yes LPC said: Yes with modifications

1130 Fifth Ave. – CHHD/ Individual Landmark
(Delano & Aldrich: 1913–1915) Alter the rooftop additions and windows and infill the light-well.

Friends said: Yes LPC said: Yes

M A D I S O N A V E N U E

718 Madison Ave. – UESHD
(George Inslee: 1871) Construct a three-story rear yard addition.

Friends said: Yes LPC said: Yes

823-25 Madison Ave. – UESHD
(Lamb & Wheeler: 1880 altered, S. Edson Gage: 1926) Enlargement of existing masonry openings to provide for double height windows.

Friends said: No LPC said: Yes with modifications

863-65 Madison Ave. St. James Protestant Episcopal Church – UESHD
(Grosvenor Atterbury: 1937) Alter the entrance to provide at-grade access.

Friends said: Yes LPC said: Yes

L E X I N G T O N A V E N U E

963 Lexington Ave. – UESHD
(Thom & Wilson: 1887–88) Replace the windows.

Friends said: No LPC said: No decision

S E C O N D A V E N U E

The Queensboro Bridge – Individual Landmark
(Gustav Lindenthal, engineer and Henry Hornbostel, architect: 1901–08) Install a sculpture at the Manhattan approach plaza.

Friends said: No LPC said: No Decision

**FRIENDS of the Upper East Side
Historic Districts, founded in 1982,
is an independent, not-for-profit
membership organization dedicated
to preserving the architectural
legacy, livability, and sense of place
of the Upper East Side.**

**In addition to safeguarding the
future of the Upper East Side's six
historic districts and 125 individual
landmarks, and being an advocate
for sound preservation policies for
the city, FRIENDS seeks to maintain
and improve zoning laws governing
the area's avenues and residential
side streets.**

*For more information please telephone
(212) 535-2526 or visit www.friends-ues.org*

FRIENDS OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE
HISTORIC DISTRICTS
20 EAST 69TH STREET, 4B
NEW YORK, NY 10021

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