

# FRIENDS

of the UPPER EAST SIDE  
HISTORIC DISTRICTS

*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.*

WINTER 2014

## NEWS FROM FRIENDS

### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



*An early proposal for 1010 Park Avenue published on [newyorkyimby.com](http://newyorkyimby.com), image by Keith Goich.*

Earlier this Fall, YIMBY (“YES In My Back Yard”), a real estate web site, published a rendering of a glass high-rise next to the Park Avenue Christian Church at 85th Street. The speculative design would have cantilevered over the entire width of the historic building, sheathing it in glass, and lopping off its signature fleche. It was an astonishingly inappropriate design for this neighborhood, and for this (or any) church

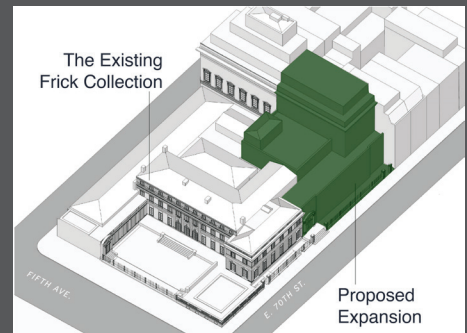
site. Park Avenue Christian Church is famously modeled after Ste. Chapelle in Paris—imagine what the Parisian response to such a proposal might be!

Although that design was not aired publicly at the time, a subsequent one, with a smaller masonry cantilever, was filed with the Department of Buildings, igniting renewed calls for the designation of a long-pending historic district along Park Avenue from 79th Street to 91st Street. This is what I call the “Personal Penn Station Effect”—the galvanizing power of the shocking proposal, or worse demolition, that can drive a neighborhood effort the way the destruction of Penn Station drove the citywide preservation movement in 1963.

Such crisis-driven preservation is obviously not ideal, and it also does not give credit to the devoted and energetic grassroots leaders who recognize our city’s historic resources and advocate for them diligently, like our friends at Historic Park Avenue. What is ideal is comprehensive preserva-

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### FRIENDS ANNOUNCES OPPOSITION TO THE FRICK EXPANSION



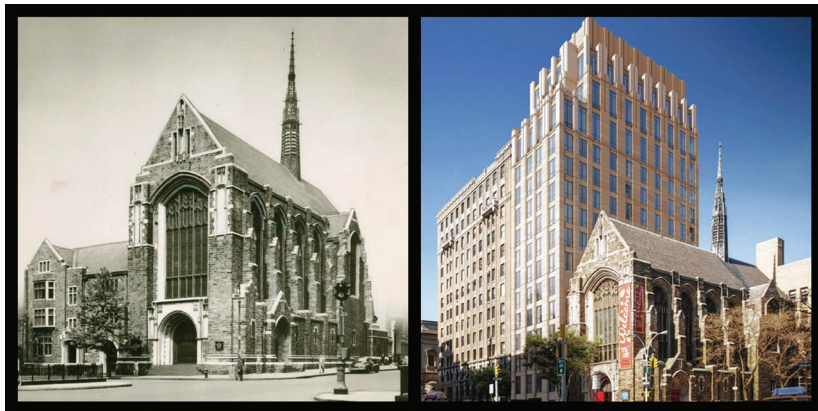
*The proposed Frick expansion replaces the 1977 Bayley addition and the Russell Page Garden.*

In June, the Frick Collection announced a 60,000 square foot expansion that would require the demolition of the 1977 Bayley addition and the Russell Page Garden on East 70th Street. FRIENDS carefully reviewed the proposal presented to our Board of Directors and sent our comments to the Frick.

To put it simply, FRIENDS is opposed to the project as presented. The Henry Clay Frick House is a National Historic Landmark, an individually-designated New York City landmark, and located within the Upper East Side Historic District. The Frick Collection is a unique mansion in an urban setting, and any alterations should be respectful of its history as a residence.

*continued on page 2.*

# THE LPC CONSIDERS A NEW TOWER FOR PARK AVENUE



*A historic view of the Park Avenue Christian Church alongside a rendering of the proposed apartment tower.*

On October 21st, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a hearing to review the first Certificate of Appropriateness application in the recently-designated Park Avenue Historic District. Unfortunately, the proposal is to demolish the Park Avenue Christian Church Parish House and build a 16-storey apartment building in its place.

When the Parish House was altered in 1963, architects Merrill & Homgren made a concerted effort to push back the addition, defer to the

church, and essentially replicate the historic Gothic Revival facade. We urge this current team to follow suit and work with the existing conditions, rather than demolish any historic fabric.

Moreover, the proposed new building at 1010 Park Avenue is not appropriate in, or sensitive to, the surrounding context of the Park Avenue Historic District—nor is it respectful of, or deferential to, the Park Avenue Christian Church. First, the design is too angular and vertical in style, with an

aggressively conspicuous crown evoking an Art Deco office tower, rather than the Revivalist-style residential buildings that are its neighbors. The contemporary character of the building—with large windows, limestone panels, and a curtain wall—stands in stark contrast to the rest of the avenue. Although the applicants have stated that the fenestration is meant to relate to its neighbor at 1000 Park Avenue, a 1915 Gothic Revival Emery Roth building with punched openings, the proposed windows are much too large, disrupting the rhythm of the streetscape. Furthermore, the amount of glazing on the northern and western facades is grossly inappropriate for a secondary elevation on the mid-block.

In sum, this new proposal is better suited for commercial Midtown than residential Park Avenue. The first application in the Park Avenue Historic District will set an important precedent, and we hope it will be appropriate for both the site and the neighborhood. The current proposal is appropriate for neither. ♦

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*continued from page 1.*

tion planning that looks at a neighborhood as a whole and in the context of the city at large, identifying its strengths and vulnerabilities, seeking to preserve the best of a community, while welcoming appropriate growth. That is why FRIENDS has undertaken the Yorkville survey, which you have read about in previous newsletters.

This “Personal Penn Station” idea is germane to next year’s observance of the 50th anniversary of the New York City Landmarks Law. In collaboration with the New York Preservation Archive Project, FRIENDS will launch the year’s celebration with an event recognizing the impact of the demolition of the Brokaw Mansion on 79th Street and Fifth Avenue, another one of those signal moments of loss that ultimately served a higher purpose. We look forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely,

Franny Eberhart

## OPPOSITION TO FRICK

*continued from page 1.*

The proposed project is far too large and ungainly, overwhelming the museum, as well as the streetscape. The green space flanking the Frick contributes to the sense that it is an important free-standing structure. The Russell Page Garden is significant in its own right, and is further protected as part of the landmark site. Finally, there are many other options for expansion that have yet to be pursued.

FRIENDS welcomes continued discussion with the leadership at the Frick. We look forward to seeing a revised proposal, taking our comments into account. Please visit our website ([www.friends-ues.org](http://www.friends-ues.org)) for continued updates on this important issue. ♦

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## INTERIORS

### A BOOK TALK

We are pleased to welcome interior designer Sandra Nunnerly for a book talk and signing as she presents a new collection of her work, *Interiors*. Ms. Nunnerly is a talented and prolific interior designer who has worked extensively on the Upper East Side—and *Interiors*, written by Christine Pittel, is the first chronicle of her career and exquisite work. The elegant volume covers a range of projects showcasing Ms. Nunnerly's skill in a variety of styles—from the modern home of an art patron to a duplex at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel.

**Wednesday, February 4th**

**6:30pm**

**75 East 93rd Street, at Park Avenue**

## THE BROKAW MANSION

### A LANDMARKS50 EVENT

Following the completion of Central Park, upper Fifth Avenue became New York City's most desirable address, where prominent families constructed opulent mansions. Within a generation they were quickly replaced with the latest trend—luxury apartment buildings. The Brokaw Mansion met this sad fate and was demolished in 1965. But all was not lost! Public outcry and scathing press led Mayor

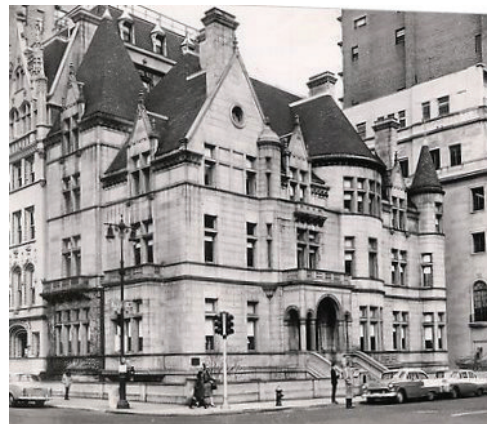
Wagner to sign the landmarks legislation into law. Join FRIENDS as we explore and celebrate this catalyzing moment in the history of the Landmarks Law as part of the commemoration of its 50th Anniversary!

**Wednesday, February 18th**

**6:30 p.m.**

**The Ukrainian Institute, 2 East 79th Street**

*Presented in Partnership with the New York Preservation Archive Project, the NYC Landmarks50 Alliance, and the Ukrainian Institute.*



*The demolition of the Brokaw Mansion in 1965 prompted Mayor Wagner to sign the Landmarks Law 50 years ago.*

**Events cost \$15.00 for members and \$20.00 for non-members. Please visit [www.friends-ues.org/events](http://www.friends-ues.org/events) for more information and to purchase tickets online.**

## SUMMERING WITH FRIENDS

This summer FRIENDS welcomed Antony Espinal de Leon as a summer intern from the Department of Education's Career & Technical Education Internship Program. Antony is a student at the Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design in Brooklyn and an aspiring architect. Although he was only with us for six short weeks, a lot was accomplished. From assisting Education Coordinator Heidi Carey with school programs, to working diligently to help us complete the Yorkville Survey, Antony contributed to a wide range of projects—he even read advisory testimony before the Landmarks Preservation Commission! FRIENDS made sure it wasn't all hard work though, and organized a weekly field trip to museums and sites of interest. Two of his favorites were a tour of the Park Avenue Armory and a trip up to New Canaan, Connecticut for a private tour of Philip Johnson's Glass House.

We enjoyed having Antony in the office, and hope this experience will add to his architectural education. We expect great things from him in the future!

## CALL FOR ENTRIES

Each spring, FRIENDS recognizes outstanding contributions to the Upper East Side in the fields of preservation, architecture, and advocacy. We are accepting nominations for our 2015 Annual Awards, so if you know of any exceptional restorations, contextual new buildings, or even a distinguished advocate for the neighborhood, please let us know! Projects completed between December 1, 2013 and December 1, 2014 will be considered. Contact Michael Hall at 212-535-2526 or [mhall@friends-ues.org](mailto:mhall@friends-ues.org) for more information.



# Next Stop for Subway Inn



*Subway Inn has been serving drinks from 143 East 60th Street since 1937.*

Subway Inn—the iconic dive bar threatened with eviction for the last few months—will be moving to a new location at the end of the year. The bar has been swinging suds from the corner of 60th Street and Lexington Avenue for 77 years. In addition to daily visits

by loyal regulars, the well-worn interior has welcomed the likes of Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio after long days of shooting *The Seven Year Itch*. The bar was also mentioned in *The Goldfinch* by Pulitzer Prize winning author Donna Tartt, and has made recent cameos in Anthony Bourdain's *The Layover* and the CBS drama *Person of Interest*.

Rumors about the bar's fate began swirling last winter as World-Wide Group purchased the last lot in a 200-foot stretch along East 60th Street, and this summer the beloved neighborhood dive was asked to leave. The Salinas Family, who has owned the bar for the last 40 years, decided to fight the developer's eviction until they could assess the importance of the building and interior in terms of architectural merit and cultural importance. FRIENDS of the Upper East Side and the Historic Districts Council helped

guide the family through the various ways of understanding the building's significance as it relates to the New York City Landmarks Law.

In the end, the Salinas family was able to work out a solution where they will relocate the famous 1940s neon sign and the bar's interior to another location just a couple of blocks away on Second Avenue. Small businesses make an important contribution the Upper East Side's sense of place, and FRIENDS has honored a number of them with "Good Neighbor" awards in recent years including Glaser's Bakery and Schaller & Weber. Unfortunately it is quickly becoming a trend for decades-old small businesses to be priced out by major brands, and some of our favorites have been lost for good. In this case, we are happy to see that Subway Inn will continue serving our neighborhood, albeit in a new location, for years to come. ♦

## COLUMBIA STUDENTS PRESENT YORKVILLE FINDINGS



*Students from Columbia University present their Yorkville Study to the public.*

the study developed walking tours of Yorkville's historic garages and mid-century modern white brick apartment buildings.

This past May, graduate students in Columbia University's Master of Historic Preservation program presented their study of the Yorkville neighborhood to members of the community at St. Jean Baptiste High School. Eight students undertook a study of the area from East 70th to East 90th Streets, and Third Avenue to the East River, as part of their spring studio course. This study included a comprehensive survey of buildings, suggestions for individual landmarks, proposals for historic districts, and material conservation recommendations. Anticipating the impact of the new Second Avenue Subway, the students also issued planning and zoning recommendations along Second Avenue from 79th to 86th Streets, including the protection of existing mid-block retail and the reduction of the FAR allowance for community facilities. In addition,

FRIENDS will consider the recommendations offered by the studio and put this work to good use in our continuing efforts to preserve and celebrate Yorkville. Stay tuned! ♦

# ELEVENTH ANNUAL AMBASSADOR TO THE UPPER EAST SIDE AWARD DINNER

On Tuesday, September 30th, friends from around the city attended the *Eleventh Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner* at the Union Club at 101 East 69th Street. This year, Honorary Chair Frederick W. Beinecke and FRIENDS of the Upper East Side presented the award to Walter B. Melvin. In turn, Mr. Melvin honored us, by asserting that advocates like FRIENDS are the ones to be applauded for our work promoting preservation. This, he says, is much harder than what he does as an architect!

It was a great evening for all. A very special thanks go out to the Benefit Committee for their assistance in organizing the event and making it such a great success! With the funds raised, FRIENDS can continue our mission as steward of the Upper East Side's seven historic districts and 128 individual landmarks. ♦



*Dr. Thomas Schutte, President of Pratt Institute, with FRIENDS Board Member Christina Davis.*

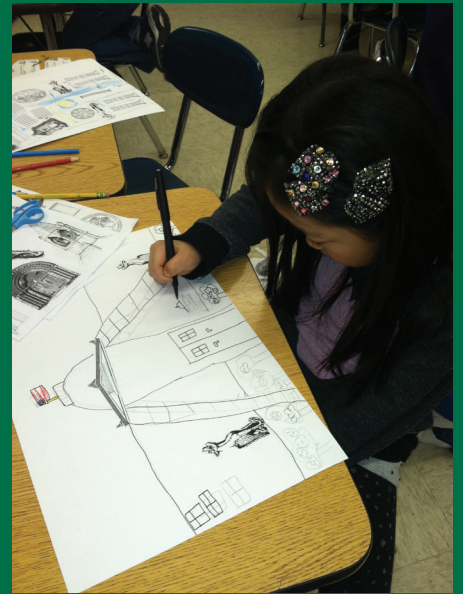


*Our honoree, Walter B. Melvin, with FRIENDS President Franny Eberhart.*



*Guests enjoyed a new setting at the Union Club.*

## BIG PLANS FOR YOUNG FRIENDS



*A young architect designs her first building.*

Thanks to the generosity of the Selz Foundation, in 2014-2015 FRIENDS is happy to announce free programming for all schools in East Harlem and free Yorkville Immigration or Landmarks & Preservation classes for any school that has never participated in these offerings. Last year was our biggest to date, reaching over 1200 children, and this funding will allow us to reach even more students in New York City schools this year.

We are already off to a great beginning this fall, with multiple classes in 11 schools already enrolled in our architecture education programs.

With the impending completion of the Second Avenue Subway, the Frick expansion, and the new Park Avenue Historic District currently in the news, it is more important than ever that children gain an understanding and appreciation of the architecture of their communities—their neighborhoods—and this great city of ours. ♦



## OUR MISSION

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 monitoring the Upper East Side's seven historic districts and 128 individual landmarks, FRIENDS has also been a leader in successful efforts to improve the zoning laws governing the area's avenues and residential side streets. Through effective advocacy and successful educational programs, FRIENDS acts as a steward safeguarding the future of all Upper East Side historic districts and the designated and contributing buildings that make those districts special.

## 2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## IN GRATITUDE

FRIENDS of the Upper East Side Historic Districts wishes to acknowledge the generous support of: The Gilbert & Ildiko Butler Conservation Fund, Joan K. Davidson (The J.M. Kaplan Fund), the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, City Council Member Daniel Garodnick, City Council Member Benjamin Kallos, and the Selz Foundation.

## CORPORATE SUPPORT

CWB Architects; Darren Henault Interiors; Davis Brody Bond; Essex Works, Ltd; Henry Miller Opticians; L'Art de Vivre; Lexington Gardens; McCabes Wine & Spirits; Morali Architects, PLLC; Piepers + Kojen; Platt Byard Dovell White; Thomas A. Fenniman, Architect.

FRIENDS of the Upper East Side Historic Districts  
966 Lexington Avenue, #3E New York, NY 10021  
t. 212-535-2526 f. 212-535-2155  
[www.friends-ues.org](http://www.friends-ues.org)



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