



# NEWS *from* FRIENDS

WINTER 2008

## Support Grows for Upper East Side Historic District Expansion

As our readers and friends know, FRIENDS of the Upper East Side Historic Districts has launched our efforts toward expanding the New York City Upper East Side Historic District at the city level to include Lexington Avenue and the nearby residential side-



866 Lexington Avenue, *The Parge House*

streets. Thanks to FRIENDS' efforts, the expanded district was listed in 2006 on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. This was a significant milestone in the recognition of the architecture and history of the neighborhood, but this will not protect buildings from demolition or damaging alterations. It is only through designation at the city level by the New York City Landmarks Preservation

Commission (LPC) that the architecture and scale of the neighborhood will be protected and preserved.

The existing city district, designated in 1981 by the LPC, spans the streets east and west of Lexington Avenue between East 60th and East 75th Streets. Since being designated by the LPC, property values have significantly increased for the 57 blocks within the 1981 district. At the same time, the architectural and historical character of this world famous neighborhood has been preserved for New Yorkers and visitors

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Storefront detail of 1055 Lexington Avenue

## NEW Walking Tour Guidebook!



FRIENDS is pleased to announce the publication of our new walking tour guide, *Historic Lexington Avenue: An Expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District* by Anthony Robins and Friends of the Upper East Side

Historic Districts. This fun and informative self guided tour covers the newly extended Upper East Side Historic District as listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The expanded national and state district includes sections of Lexington Avenue and residential sidestreets between East 60th and East 75th Streets. To learn more about the expansion area and how you can help support this district expansion at the local level, visit our web exhibit and buildings catalogue at [www.friends-ues.org](http://www.friends-ues.org). The guidebook is free for our members. If you aren't a member yet, join FRIENDS and we will send you a complementary guide right away.

## Support for the Expansion (continued)

alike. By expanding the Upper East Side Historic District we can assure that the positive effects of landmark status will reach the expansion area prior to the further loss of historic fabric and before the construction of large-scale and inappropriate development.

Like other parts of the Upper East Side Historic District, there are many architectural highlights in the expansion area including low-rise 19th century rowhouses, stately apartment houses, charming stable buildings, the legendary Barbizon Hotel and the



160 E. 72nd Street

famed Skyline Diner building. There are also wonderful and unusual examples of residential architecture, such as the white stucco Parge House at East 65th Street and the grand Kean Residence at 861-63 Lexington Avenue. Bustling commercial storefronts along Lexington Avenue unite the residential areas contributing to the neighborhood's livability, sense of place and welcoming appeal.

Because we know we have our work cut out for us, FRIENDS has been busy over the last few months building enthusiasm and support for the expanded district. This summer we submitted a 150-page proposal to the LPC for the expansion. We have also made many new friends this Fall on our walking tours and at house parties in the neighborhood resulting in hundreds of signatures of support from homeowners, shopkeepers and co-op owners. Preservation organizations throughout the city and state as well as our elected officials are also in favor of bringing this proposal to a hearing for landmarks consideration. Despite such overwhelming support, the LPC has not yet acted!

What does the future hold for Lexington Avenue, its beloved neighborhood haunts and one-of-a-kind



134 E. 65th Street

architecture? If you believe in appropriate development while maintaining the low scale, sense of place and historic architecture of the neighborhood, then we urge you to make your voice heard via emails, letters, petitions and postcards to Chairman Robert Tierney of the Landmarks Preservation Commission and Mayor Michael Bloomberg. We already have hundreds of supporters but we need thousands to save this quintessential New York City neighborhood! Please visit our website for more information at [www.friends-ues.org](http://www.friends-ues.org).

## Voice Your Support

### LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert Tierney, Chair  
Municipal Building  
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### UPPER EAST SIDE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Hon. Michael R. Bloomberg  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007  
P: 212.788.3000

## Join us for a Tour

To celebrate the publication of the guidebook, we offered free walking tours of the expansion area throughout the Fall. Stay on the lookout for future tours and be sure to join our email list for updates and events at [www.friends-ues.org](http://www.friends-ues.org).

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# Manhattan House Designated a New York City Landmark

MANHATTAN HOUSE, highlighted in FRIENDS' exhibit "Landmarks of the Future," was designated a New York City landmark on October 30th, 2007.

Located at 200 East 66th Street, Manhattan House is New York City's first "white brick" apartment building and is one of the most influential examples of post-war housing in New York City. Completed in 1950 by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the 19-story residential and retail complex was erected as part of an urban renewal project by the New York Life Insurance Company. In this neighborhood formerly defined by tenements, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill provided a precedent-setting, light-filled building that attracted famous residents such as Grace Kelley, Benny Goodman and Florence Knoll.

The remarkable siting of Manhattan House revolutionized the apartment block in New York City by locating a single large building through the center of the block with garden areas on each

side. Through the use of an innovative H-plan, as opposed to the standard inner courtyard, the design allows for greater light and cross-ventilation to 95 percent of its apartments. Fine modern elements such as the Bauhaus-style balconies and International Style glass lobby further provide access to light and to gardens.

In 2001/2002, Manhattan House was highlighted in our exhibit "Landmarks of the Future: Modern Architecture on the Upper East Side" and has been the focus of a FRIENDS advocacy campaign since that time. Sadly, despite the popularity of our modern show, five landmark eligible masterpieces of modern architecture from the exhibit have either been demolished or heavily altered. Those losses include the Beekman Theater, Cinemas I and II, the Group Residence for Young Adults and the Richard Feigen Gallery. This unfortunate and discouraging trend in our neighborhood can only emphasize the importance of designating



*Manhattan House (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Mayer & Whittlesey: 1950), Ezra Stoller © Esto.*

Manhattan House as a world class modern landmark not only for the Upper East Side, but for all of New York City. For more information on our exhibit, visit <http://www.friends-ues.org/Moderns.htm>.

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## Preservation Lobby Day A Success! City Increases Funding for Landmarks Commission

Last May, FRIENDS together with a coalition of over 30 preservation groups successfully lobbied for additional funding for the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. In addition to a letter writing campaign, we held a rally on the steps of City Hall, where City Council Members Jessica Lappin, Dan Garodnick, Tony Avella and Borough President Scott Stringer spoke out on the need for more LPC funding.

And our efforts paid off. In June, the City Council and the Mayor agreed on the coming year's budget, including a budget increase for the second year in a

row for the LPC. Funding in fiscal year 2008 will grow by \$300,000. Last year, the council increased funding by an additional \$250,000. This additional support will allow the commission to add staff, and increase both the rate of designations and the efficiency with which permits are processed. Thank you to all who called, emailed and wrote letters in support of these much needed funds. We owe a great deal of gratitude to our Upper East Side Council Members, Jessica Lappin and Dan Garodnick. Stay tuned for details on Preservation Lobby Day 2008.

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## FRIENDS in the news...

FRIENDS' Executive Director, Seri Worden advocates for the original Guggenheim Museum paint color on *National Public Radio*. On December 15th, FRIENDS was featured in *The New York Times* Weekend Explorer Column. You can learn about the Upper East Side's rich architectural and social history by downloading the article, audio walking tour and video with commentary by FRIENDS' Executive Director Seri Worden at [www.friends-ues.org/press.htm](http://www.friends-ues.org/press.htm).

# Owner Sues City to De-Designate a Landmark

Last Fall, FRIENDS was pleased to report on the landmark designation of 429 East 64th and 430 East 65th Street of City and Suburban Homes Company, First Avenue Estate. Sadly, it's been a pyrrhic victory for these very significant buildings built between 1898 and 1915 as model tenements to address the housing problems of the nation's working poor. Leading up to last year's LPC hearing, there was a great outpouring of public support for designation; Councilwoman Jessica Lappin sponsored a popular town hall meeting and FRIENDS gathered hundreds of signed postcards in support of designation.

Unfortunately, days before the hearing, the owners of the buildings began to fulfill existing building permits to deface the building through damaging alterations while they were still occupied by many rent controlled and elderly tenants. Now, nearly a year after the buildings were designated, the decorative cornices and geometric brick detailing have been demolished, the lovely buff brick covered in bright red stucco and the windows enlarged in a haphazard manner. Because the permits were issued prior to the LPC calendaring these buildings for a hearing, the work could be legally carried out in full. This has been an unconscionable attempt by unsympathetic owners to thwart the rightful designation of these very worthy buildings.

With these destructive alterations, the owners Stahl and Company have filed a lawsuit against the city to revoke the buildings' landmark status to reportedly allow for their demolition and replacement with luxury towers. As discouraging as the situation is, FRIENDS is optimistic that the lawsuit will be dismissed. Testimony at City Hall and the LPC by FRIENDS, other preservation groups and residents of

the buildings stressed the social and historical significance of the complex. In addition, the designation of the buildings was approved by the LPC and by the City Council despite the scope of the proposed alterations. This blatant disregard for a New York City social, historical and architectural landmark is extremely disheartening, especially one built to house the city's working poor. FRIENDS will keep our readers updated as the situation progresses.



*York Avenue façade of First Avenue Estate, conditions in December 2007.*



*York Avenue façade, (photo 1913-1923). The building retained this façade until 2006.*

## LETTER *from the* PRESIDENT

FRIENDS has begun our outreach for the extension of the Upper East Side Historic District to include Lexington Avenue from 60th to 75th Street. These are unprotected blocks of low-scale historic buildings that **MUST** be preserved to keep any semblance of personality. We have published a map, an informational brochure and a walking tour guide. These publications have been widely distributed and have helped to inform the community of the importance of the Lexington Avenue extension.

But the most rewarding aspect has been finding new FRIENDS and neighbors - and their enthusiasm and appreciation for the neighborhood. Their interest and camaraderie in our Lexington Avenue project has created an enthusiastic and encouraging atmosphere! The reaction of neighborhood shopkeepers has also been exciting. Many are willing to help in any way they can and you will be hearing more in the new year.

Congratulations to all who have already helped. We will keep you posted as we make our way towards a hearing at the Landmarks Commission. We will need you!

In the meantime, thank you for your time and care in keeping this special "neck of the woods" the unique place it is.

*Gene M. Ward*

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# Fall Benefit

## Honoring Peter Pennoyer, Architect and Author

On September 26, 2007, over 120 "friends" from across the city gathered for our Fourth Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side award dinner honoring Peter Pennoyer, Architect and Author. Peter Pennoyer is the principal of the eponymous architecture firm that has a national practice in classical and traditional architecture. The firm's work is recognized for combining an inventive spirit with an erudite grasp of architectural history and has been widely published and exhibited. Mr. Pennoyer serves on the boards of the Institute for Classical Architecture & Classical America, the Morgan Library & Museum, and the Whiting Foundation. He is coauthor, with Anne Walker, of *The Architecture of Delano and Aldrich*, *The Architecture of Warren & Wetmore*, and *The Architecture of Grosvenor Atterbury* (W.W. Norton 2008).

We were very fortunate that Paul Gunther, President of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America was there to co-host this special evening. Mr. Pennoyer gave a lively talk on his extensive and impressive work that everyone thoroughly enjoyed. With such outstanding company, it was an evening to remember!

Special thanks to the Benefit Committee and all those who helped to make the event so successful. With the money raised, FRIENDS can continue to be the vigilant curator of the Upper East Side's architectural heritage.



*Honoree Peter Pennoyer with wife Katie Ridder and children Jane and Tony.*



*Tom Armstrong, Brenda and Kelley Anderson and Helen Tucker.*



*Bob Bristol, Cullen Barrie, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, Friends' President Anne Millard, LPC Chair Robert Tierney and Howard Zipsper.*

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## PRESERVATION COMMITTEE NEWS

Each month FRIENDS' Preservation Committee reviews all Certificates 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 at the LPC's public hearings. The monthly agenda is posted on our web site ([friends-ues.org/currentLPC.htm](http://friends-ues.org/currentLPC.htm)) along with photos and FRIENDS' Testimony and most importantly, the Commission's decision. Visit our website for a comprehensive list of applications.

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## Save the Date!

Join FRIENDS for our Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony on Tuesday March 18, 2008 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at The New York School of Interior Design, 170 East 70th Street. The public is welcome to attend but reservations are required. Please call (212) 535-2526 or email [info@friends-ues.org](mailto:info@friends-ues.org).

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## Call for Entries

Each year, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts awards outstanding achievements in preservation, architecture and advocacy on the Upper East Side. Nominations are sought for our 2008 Annual Awards. If you know of a restoration or renovation project, or even a new building that fits with its historic neighbors, let us know! Projects must be completed between October 1, 2006 and December 1st, 2007.

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# FRIENDS TOURS & EVENTS

## Upper East Side Synagogue Tour



*Congregation Edmond J. Safra, Thierry Despont Architect.*

As a thank you for their support, we brought our "Best Friends" members on a very special tour of two remarkable synagogues on the Upper East Side. We began our afternoon at Temple Emanuel located at the corner of Fifth Avenue and East 65th Street, home to the largest Reform congregation in the United States. Completed in 1929, this lavish and impressive building was designed in the Deco-Moorish-Romanesque style.

Next, we visited Congregation Edmond J. Safra at 11 East 63d Street. Completed in 2002, this exquisite Contemporary Neo-Classical building joins a distinguished row of Beaux-Arts

rowhouses within the Upper East Side Historic District. Rabbi Elie Abadie took us on a special "behind the scenes" tour of this spectacular Jerusalem stone jewel-box. In 2004, FRIENDS presented an award to the congregation and the building's architect, Thierry Despont for this fine contextual intervention. Join FRIENDS at the "Best Friend" level for other upcoming "behind-the-scenes" events.

## Best Friends Tour of Bethesda Terrace Arcade

This summer, FRIENDS' members were treated to an evening tour of the recently restored Bethesda Terrace Arcade and Minton tile ceiling. The treasured tile ceiling was designed by Jacob Wrey Mould in the mid-1860s and manufactured by the Minton Company of Stoke-on-Trent, England. Until March of 2007, the majority of the nearly 16,000 ornately colored Minton encaustic ceramic tiles were in storage for more than two decades. Jim Reed of the Central Park Conservancy guided us on a site tour of the arcade and discussed the Conservancy's twenty year effort to restore this architectural gem within Central Park.



*Bethesda Terrace Arcade*

## Informing our Friends

FRIENDS continues to be a good neighbor. Via an e-mail list, we inform the community about items under review at the LPC and we have recently implemented an email alert

list of important preservation issues on the Upper East Side. Members can subscribe by visiting our website at [www.friends-ues.org](http://www.friends-ues.org).

## 2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Anne L. Millard, *President*

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Seri Worden, *Executive Director*

## 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 126 individual landmarks, and as an advocate for sound preservation policies for the city, Friends has also been a leader in successful efforts to improve dramatically the zoning laws governing the area's avenues and residential side streets.

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## Join us for Young Friends

FRIENDS is excited to announce the return of our Young Friends education program. Designed by Jane Cowan, the three visit program served more than 700 first-, second- and fourth-grade public and private school children from 1995-2005. Our three session mini course aims to develop an appreciation for and awareness of the built environment. During the first session of the course, students learn architectural vocabulary, which enables them to “read” a building’s age, material, purpose, and nature of the neighborhood at the time of construction. Armed with their new knowledge, the students venture out into their school’s neighborhood for the second class. In the field, the students have the opportunity to use their new vocabulary to survey the blocks, and to learn important information about their neighborhood’s history. During the third session, the students have a chance to become architects and design a building of their own, using collage materials. By stimulating an interest in architecture, the program strives to



instill in children a sense of community pride and an awareness of and sensitivity to their surroundings. The program will be taught by our new staff member Sarah O’Keefe, who holds a masters degree in Art History with a focus on 19th and 20th century art and architecture, and a certificate in Museum Studies with a focus in education. She has worked in community outreach and taught in the galleries at the Museum of Fine Arts in

Boston, headed a tour program at the Tufts University Art Gallery, and has taught young children as well as high school students. She is very excited about working with Young Friends and developing new lesson plans in addition to our current three part program. If you are interested in this program, please contact Sarah by email at [s.okeefe@friends-ues.org](mailto:s.okeefe@friends-ues.org), by phone at 212-535-2526.

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## Changing Times for the Yorkville Clock



The Upper East Side’s smallest landmark is the Yorkville clock, located on Third Avenue between 84th and 85th Streets. For many years it has been the property of the owner of the building where it stands, but that owner recently sold the building, and therefore the clock. The new owner is Extell Development Company, a national firm that is converting the Stanhope Hotel in the Upper East Side Historic District to condominiums, and is building a new luxury high rise at 86th Street and Lexington Avenue.

FRIENDS has been a vigilant watchdog for the clock for many years, working in collaboration with the Friends of Cast Iron Architecture to raise \$20,000 for its repair in 1998, and faithfully changing the time every Spring and Fall. As ownership has now changed with future plans unknown, FRIENDS and the clock’s neighbors will need to be even more vigilant. The Landmarks Commission has pledged to contact Extell to ensure continuing good stewardship of this Upper East Side treasure.

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This program is supported, in part,  
by public funds from the New York City  
Department of Cultural Affairs.

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# FRIENDS

*of the* UPPER EAST SIDE  
HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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