

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.

SUMMER 2015

NEWS FROM FRIENDS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

In late May we got the very good news that the Federal Court has dismissed an owner's lawsuit to permit the demolition of a landmark on the basis of financial hardship. This is of course the long running City and Suburban Homes First Avenue Estate case that FRIENDS has been fighting – if you're REALLY counting – since 1990, when the designation of the building was overturned at the very last meeting of the old Board of Estimate. In 2006 FRIENDS, along with Council Member Jessica Lappin, succeeded in getting this important building re-designated, over the objections of the owner who soon initiated his claim of hardship.

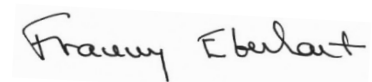
Justice Edgardo Ramos begins his decision by noting that this year marks the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the New York City Landmarks Law. And rightfully so – if the State court concurs, this decision would continue to bolster New York City's preservation law, and others across the country, on par with the significance of the Supreme Court's Penn Central decision.

The City of New York has defended the resolution of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, but interested groups were welcomed to submit *amicus curiae* briefs in support of the City, amplifying the critical issues involved. FRIENDS led this effort, retaining the legal counsel of Michael Gruen and Albert Butzel, formidable land use attorneys. FRIENDS also invited our elected officials and colleague preservation organizations to join as *amici*, and the following did so:

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney
State Senator Liz Krueger
State Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
City Council Member Benjamin Kallos
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Preservation League of New York State
New York Landmarks Conservancy*
Historic Districts Council
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation
Landmark West!
Friends of the First Avenue Estate

The 50th Anniversary is also being celebrated with events and exhibitions by the NYC Landmarks50 Alliance, and this summer is the featured exhibit entitled "Saving Place" at the Museum of the City of New York. You will marvel at what was proposed to replace Carnegie Hall and Grand Central Terminal – leading to that critical Supreme Court decision! But I think you will also see how important civic activism has been not just at the beginning, to get the law written and passed, but also over the long haul to defend the law, the Landmarks Preservation Commission that administers it, and the neighborhoods where preservation thrives and strengthens our city. That's why FRIENDS was founded, and we will continue to work (see inside page 6 about the Frick Collection), along with all of our supporters like you, to uphold and advance preservation on all fronts, including courts of law.

Sincerely,



Franny Eberhart

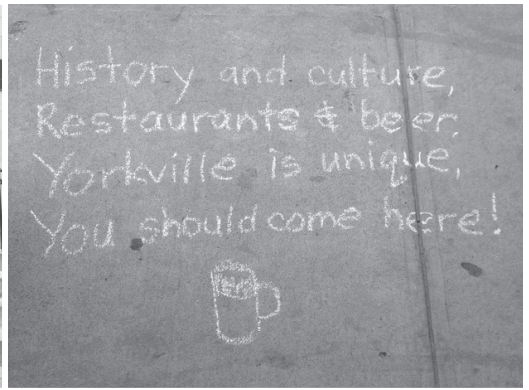
*The Conservancy submitted their own brief.

Fun for All at the Yorkville Scavenger Hunt

On May 9th, 125 neighbors, historians, preservationists, trivia buffs, families, students, and teachers all gathered in Yorkville for a high-tech urban adventure. The hunt took them all over the neighborhood, which was first settled

imitating the architecture or interacting with the neighborhood. There were stops at local haunts like Glaser's Bakery, Schaller & Weber, and Heidelberg Restaurant, and there was even a live actor playing Jacob Ruppert, founder of the

Another said: "It was a cool experience. Well written and researched. I was impressed. I say this as a lifelong resident who is knowledgeable on borough history, and as a tour guide and adjunct history professor."



Yorkvillians of all generations enjoyed a fun day out in the neighborhood.

by German immigrants in the late 18th century. Although it has changed now, evidence of this historic fabric remains in the built environment. Some of these remnants are not easily noticed by passersby, making it the prime location for scavenger hunt participants to find hidden clues to the past through a variety of different challenges.

Groups used interactive technology to engage with local landmarks and learn about how late 19th and early 20th century immigrants lived. One task was to write a love poem about Yorkville. Dynamic photo challenges required players to snap shots of their team, sometimes

Ruppert Brewery and owner of the New York Yankees from 1915 to 1939! Through trivia and memory questions, the teams discovered how immigrant groups lived, worked, worshiped, and played, as well as how they retained their culture through food, music, and language.

One participant commented: "Fabulous idea to connect historic preservation and new media/technology. Doing so illustrates its approachability and relevance to all audiences ... and makes engagement all the more fun! The Go Game was smartly crafted and FRIENDS even smarter for utilizing it as a tool!"

The hunt ended at the local favorite Ryan's Daughter Pub, where Council Member Benjamin Kallos announced the winners and participants recounted highlights from the day over drinks and cold cuts from Schaller & Weber.



The program was supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and Council Member Benjamin Kallos. ♦

THE UPPER EAST SIDE: A STUDY OF FIVE NEIGHBORHOODS



Early analysis shows that more than a third of parcels on the Upper East Side contain rent-regulated units.

The first segment of the long-awaited Second Avenue Subway is scheduled to open in December 2016. This \$4.5 billion dollar public investment in transit infrastructure not only addresses long-standing overcrowding and level of service issues in the transportation system, it is doing what all such ambitious investments do: significantly increasing real estate market demand within walking distance of the new subway station stops, in this case at the intersections of Second Avenue with East 96th, East 86th and East 72nd Streets. Anticipating that significant improvements to the Upper East Side's transportation infrastructure are on the horizon, new residential development has begun to increase noticeably in proximity to the new transit line.

FRIENDS supports smart growth in New York City, including the careful placement of higher density development at transit hubs and along broad north-south avenues and wide east-west streets. However, it is abundantly clear



Less than one percent of land area on the Upper East Side is devoted to parks or open space. Our public parks and playgrounds are overcrowded, while "privately owned public spaces" (POPS) are often inaccessible.

that we need thoughtfully-prescribed zoning regulations controlling use, bulk placement, and height, to mitigate the impact of development on light, air, open spaces, historic resources, and local character of the Upper East Side. Our neighborhoods are vulnerable to all sorts of inappropriately-scaled, poorly-sited and non-contextual high-density development that merely seeks to capture the new real estate market demand, particularly for luxury residential use.

Upper East Side residents have witnessed with alarm the out-of-scale supertowers rising in

Midtown, and wonder if the phenomenon could spread to the Second Avenue corridor and its vicinity. And finally, the City Planning Commission has announced the Zoning for Quality and Affordability Text Amendment, and will soon be proposing upzonings to selected, but unnamed, neighborhoods to spur high density development to meet the Mayor's ambitious targets for the creation of new affordable housing.

In the context of such change and uncertainty, FRIENDS seeks to examine the parts of our neighborhood that are most at risk of being negatively impacted by these forces, particularly the eastern avenues and the low-rise mid-blocks. We want to identify the essential elements that give them sense of place, the factors in its current zoning that support that individual character, what specific development risks threaten community integrity, and what strategies would best work to balance continued growth with preservation of quality of life and the quality of the urban environment into the future. Ultimately, this work should produce a set of public policy recommendations that can achieve that balance, with a heavy emphasis on preserving the historic and unique community character of the Upper East Side.

FRIENDS is well-prepared to continue the survey of potential landmarks, and advocate for designations. To answer the broader and more fundamental questions about district-wide zoning, demographics, and development, however, we have commissioned BFJ Planning to examine the area from 59th to 110th Streets.

Look out for BFJ's report which will provide recommendations for land use and design proposals that preserve the best of our East Side neighborhoods while accommodating growth. FRIENDS will launch a public education and advocacy campaign this fall, presenting these findings to a general audience, as well as elected officials and policy makers. ♦

CONTROVERSY AT 807 PARK



807 Park Avenue: Existing, Proposed & Approved (from left to right).

In the fall of 2014, owners of 807 Park Avenue, located between 74th and 75th Streets in the Upper East Side Historic District, filed an application for demolition on the grounds that the existing building differs from what is described in the designation report. Sometime between 1979, when the report was written, and 1981, when the district was designated, a six-story addition was added to the original five-story tenement building. The project team claimed that this voids the protected status of the building as it has been significantly altered.

The item was heard at the Landmarks Preservation Commission four times, on December 2nd of last year, and February 10th, March 24th, and June 9th of this year. At the first three hearings the applicant presented the same basic proposal, with only minor

changes shown at the hearing on March 24th. Similarly, FRIENDS offered advisory testimony at all three of these hearings, each time stating that “the demolition of a building in a historic district is a serious undertaking, and not to be taken lightly.” We were unconvinced that there was reasonable cause to demolish the historic building.

Further, we highlighted how disrespectful it was for an applicant to repeatedly return to present the same proposal, with no effort to incorporate changes requested by the Commission. By the third hearing, the applicant had ignored two specific requests by Chair Srinivasan to make changes.

Thankfully the Commissioners were steadfast in their resistance to the proposal.

At the hearing on March 24th Chair Srinivasan asked for, in no uncertain terms, a new proposal that addressed all of the Commission’s concerns, including the “meaningful” incorporation of the remaining historic building fabric into a new design. On June 9th the applicant presented a new proposal which retained the 5-story historic base. FRIENDS provided additional written testimony asking the applicant to further fine-tune their design. The Commission, however, was happy with the progress and approved the application. While the end result isn’t perfect, FRIENDS is grateful to the Commission for its unyielding commitment to the original five-story tenement building. Without their resolve, this part of Upper East Side history would be gone forever. ♦

ANOTHER WIN FOR PRESERVATION

Last November the Landmarks Preservation Commission announced a plan to remove nearly 100 buildings from consideration for designation. When a building passes the Commission's initial review and is found to meet their basic requirements for designation, it is put on their calendar for a public hearing. At the time a building is "calendared," it receives provisional protections under the New York City Landmarks Law until approved or denied as a landmark. For various reasons, the Commission has built up a backlog of items that were calendared but never designated, some of which have been languishing in limbo for decades.

While FRIENDS recognized the good inten-

tions behind clearing the backlog, we joined many other preservation groups in questioning the legitimacy of such a broad action. Shortly after the announcement, and following considerable push-back from the public, the LPC agreed to postpone the de-calendaring vote indefinitely so that they could come up with a more judicious way to handle these items. During this time, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer met with a variety of stakeholders with the goal of formulating a "clear, consistent, and transparent designation process." The result was the Proposed Backlog Action Plan for the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which was released on April 2nd, cosigned by FRIENDS. As a result, on June 19th, the Wall Street

Journal reported that the LPC would indeed hold public hearings on each of the 95 items in the backlog!

There is only one building on the Upper East Side included in the list of items that have been calendared for over 5 years, and that is 412 East 85th Street. The house was built circa 1860 and is a rare example of a wooden clapboard building in Yorkville, a remnant from the area's agrarian past. It is one of a mere seven wood-frame buildings on the Upper East Side, and the only one that is not protected by the Landmarks Law. FRIENDS has been working hard to get the building designated, and with the support of both the owners and Council Member Ben Kallos, we look forward to a public hearing sometime this fall! ♦

EXCITING ADDITIONS TO THE LEADERSHIP AT FRIENDS

At our 32nd Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony, FRIENDS nominated two new Board Members:

Sarah Chu has a background in science and education and is the Senior Forensic Policy Advocate at The Innocence Project, a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating wrongfully-convicted individuals through DNA testing and reforming the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice.

Residing at The Cherokee Apartments (a designated individual landmark, and recipient of our 2014 Restoration Award) with her husband and daughter, Ms. Chu has a good understanding of the value of historic preser-

vation. She came to our attention when she contacted FRIENDS about efforts to save the Children's Aid Society Rhinelander Children's Center building at 350 East 88th Street. Ms. Chu is very much a community activist, finding time to serve on our Community Board 8 – first as its Recording Secretary, then as its Second Vice Chair, and now as the Co-Chair of its Small Business Committee.

Ronda Wist is President of Wist Preservation Associates, which assists owners of designated properties with navigating the city's regulatory processes. She served for 10 years as Executive Director of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission and before that as Director of Land Use at the NYC Department of City Planning. Following government service, she

was a Principal at HR&A Advisors, a real estate and economic development consulting firm, where she advised individuals, organizations and government agencies with respect to historic preservation as well as represented owners and developers before the Landmarks Preservation and City Planning Commissions. At the Municipal Art Society for five years, she served as Vice President for Preservation and Government Affairs. Ms. Wist lives with her husband and son in Yorkville.

In addition, an esteemed group will form our new Board of Advisors :

Kent L. Barwick
Andrew S. Dolkart
Annie MacRae
Anthony C. Wood

Young FRIENDS



A burgeoning architect designs his first house.

Exploring arches in East Harlem. Combing for columns in Carnegie Hill. Tallying townhouses in Treadwell Farm. Young FRIENDS is everywhere this spring!

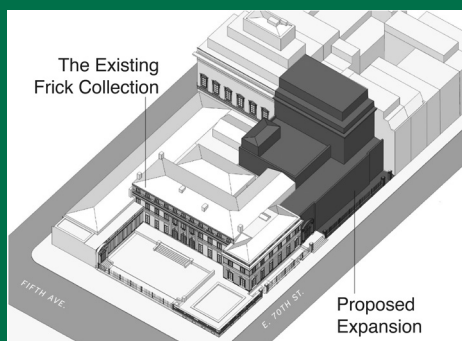
Thanks to a generous grant from the Selz Foundation, we have been able to reach more students than ever. We surpassed our goal to increase participation by 50% in East Harlem, as well as in our Yorkville Immigration and Landmarks

& Preservation programs. Young Friends has taught nearly 1,700 elementary students this year.

Perhaps we have started a student down the road to an eventual career in architecture or urban planning – wonderful indeed. But our real goal is to spark an appreciation in each child for his or her neighborhood and their city. By realizing that our buildings have a story to tell, these boys and girls are more aware of their environment and will realize the importance of architecture in their communities.

This summer, we will reach even more children when we partner with the Summer Illustration Art Academy at the Society of Illustrators. Our Building Fun program is a perfect complement to a day devoted to streetscape sketching. Young FRIENDS welcomes working with summer camps and programs as a way to teach students we may not have the chance to meet during the school year. ♦

THE FRICK ABANDONS ILL-ADVISED EXPANSION PLAN



All of us opposed to the enormous Frick expansion plan were relieved and delighted when museum officials withdrew their proposal in early June. FRIENDS has argued for a year that the bulk of the addition would overwhelm the original Henry Clay Frick mansion, and that more thoughtful space planning (as sister institutions have done all

along Museum Mile) would yield efficiencies whereby the museum's goals could be achieved without a large-scale addition.

FRIENDS has maintained throughout that we are not against an expansion that is well-considered, and we expect the Frick will return with a more appropriate proposal. We hope the museum will take this time to come up with a solution that gives primacy to the architecture and setting of their world-class historic institution, so they can continue their mission: "to offer a singular and memorable experience for the visiting public, providing an engaging view of life in the Gilded Age." ♦

FRIENDS WELCOMES A NEW STAFF MEMBER

Fresh from Columbia University's master's programs in historic preservation and urban planning, Rachel Levy is happy to bring her passion for preservation advocacy to the Upper East Side. Originally from the small coastal town of Falmouth,

Maine, she was drawn to New York City after college. She comes to FRIENDS with prior experience working at the Municipal Art Society, Park Slope Civic Council, and Landmark West! Rachel's master's thesis examined the ways that

contextual zoning has been used as a supplemental or alternative preservation planning strategy in the city, in contrast to traditional historic districts. Her research on the strengths and weaknesses of this policy approach contributes to the collective understanding of available tools for preservation advocacy in New York. Rachel is excited to dig into preservation issues facing the neighborhood in her role with FRIENDS as Preservation Associate. ♦

32ND ANNUAL AWARDS

FRIENDS held its Thirty-Second Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony on March 17, 2015 at The Cosmopolitan Club. Every year, FRIENDS highlights outstanding restoration, renovation, new construction, and advocacy work on the Upper East Side, both in and out of the historic districts. FRIENDS Board Member Hermes Mallea led the evening, once again enlightening our members with his engaging presentation of this year's projects. Following the awards ceremony, honorees and guests enjoyed a cocktail reception in the club's beautiful ballroom.

- **Good Neighbor Award**

- Donohue's Steakhouse**

- Presented by Council Member Daniel Garodnick

- **Restoration Award**

- 124 East 70th Street**

- Presented by Barry Bergdoll, Columbia University & MoMA

- **Renaissance Award**

- El Barrio's Artspace PS109**

- Presented by City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito

- **Interior Award**

- The Sherry-Netherland Hotel**

- Presented by Glenn Palmer-Smith, *Murals of New York City*

- **Preservation Advocacy Award**

- Historic Park Avenue**

- Presented by Barbara McLaughlin, The Fund for Park Avenue

- **Streetscapes Award**

- Christopher Gray**

- Presented by Erin Gray, FRIENDS of the Upper East Side Historic Districts



Council Member Daniel Garodnick presents the Good Neighbor Award to Maureen Donohue of Donohue's Steakhouse.



Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito presents the Renaissance Award to Will Law for El Barrio's Artspace PS109.



Christina Davis, Board Member at FRIENDS, and Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.



Cristiana Pena, Unite to Save the Frick; Lisa Kersavage, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission; and Hermes Mallea, Board Member at FRIENDS.

SAVE THE DATE!
Tuesday, September 29



Join FRIENDS for an exciting evening as we proudly honor Peter Duchin at our Twelfth Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner on Tuesday, September 29th.

Peter Duchin is a true ambassador who embodies the spirit of the Upper East Side, both festive and serious. He has led his orchestra at legendary New York parties, and served with energy and dedication on many non-profit boards.

Since his debut in 1962 at The Maisonette in the St. Regis Hotel, Mr. Duchin and his orchestra have provided the music for many of the nation's most notable public and private events including Truman Capote's legendary Black and White Ball at the Plaza. Mr. Duchin devotes considerable time and effort to public service. For many years he was Vice-Chair and is now an Honorary Member of the New York State Council on the Arts. In addition, he is Honorary Chair of the Board of Glimmerglass Opera and serves on the Boards of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Manhattan School of Music, Dreamyard and the Citizens Committee of New York City.

FRIENDS is pleased that Philip & Alexandra Howard have agreed to serve as Chairs of the event. Mr. Howard, an author and lawyer, is the Founder and Chair of Common Good, as well as the Chair Emeritus of the Municipal Art Society of New York where he served with Mr. Duchin for many years. Mrs. Howard, an architectural historian, executed the initial survey of the Upper East Side for the nomination to the State and National Register of Historic Places.

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 this neighborhood special.

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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; Ryan's Daughter; Thomas A. Fenniman, Architect.

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