


NEW YORK

# The Sun



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## An Area of Manhattan Takes Step Toward History

BY GARY SHAPIRO - Staff Reporter of the Sun  
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An enclave of Renaissance Revival and Queen Anne-style row houses along Manhattan Avenue between 104th and 106th streets in Manhattan may be designated a historic district. The area took its first steps toward designation last night at a community meeting where building owners and neighbors discussed the landmarks process.

"The area has that special sense of place that you look for in a historic district," the director of Landmark West!, Kate Wood, an advocate for designating the area the Manhattan Valley Historic District, said. She said the area above 96th Street has not received the same amount of landmark designation attention as the area below.

Gone is the time when drug deals, empty tree wells, and neglected buildings with squatters dotted the sloping area. These days, strollers may

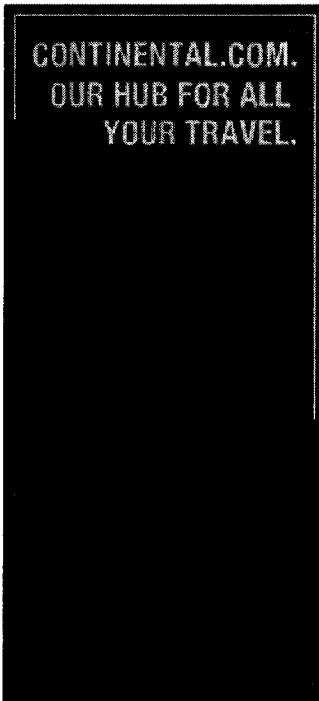
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see Caribbean food, Southern cooking, a crepe place, and Argentinean steak joint alongside chain stores.

A historic district gives residents assurance that the area where they are living is not going to be altered inconceivably, the executive director of the Historic Districts Council, Simeon Bankoff, said. Owners who want to make building changes have to get approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The executive director of Manhattan Value Development Corp., Donna Gibbons, said there are burdens as well as benefits from the designation. Ms. Gibbons, whose organization develops low- and moderate-income housing in the area, said a historic designation would make it more costly to do renovations.

A professor at Columbia University, Andrew Dolkart, said the row houses in Manhattan Valley designed for middle-class families were among the most interesting on the Upper West Side because of their modest scale and fine detail.

He cited the "dynamic rooftop silhouettes, a rich sense of texture, and an interesting use of materials, all combining to create an exciting ensemble of houses."

The cancer hospital on the corner of 106th Street and Central Park West, which is now pricey apartments, is a distinctive building in the neighborhood.

The treasurer of the Duke Ellington Boulevard Neighborhood Association, Jean Jaworek, who moved to the area around 1981, said property values had risen significantly and that she feared for the neighborhood's diversity. Through the decades, German, Irish, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Mexican immigrants have lived in the area, which has seen an influx of young urban professionals and Columbia University students. The district manager for the Columbus Amsterdam Business Improvement District,

Peter Arndtsen, said the prices of townhouses have doubled or tripled in the past decade. Crime has been relatively low.

The meeting last night was part of the public information process. If the LPC eventually votes to calendar the issue, a public hearing will take place at which the public will give testimony.

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