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UPPER WEST SIDE

A Bid to Shield a Row of Sturdy Soldiers

By **ALEX MINDLIN**

GENERATIONS come and go on West End Avenue. White-collar types have replaced exiled Viennese Jews, and the Freudians in ground-floor suites have given way to cognitive behaviorists.

But for all that, the structures along the avenue have barely changed. Since the 1920s, West End has presented the same sleepy procession of ornamented brick and limestone 15-story apartment buildings, with an occasional town house from the 1890s.

That may be changing. A 20-story condominium building is expected to rise by next summer at 86th Street and West End Avenue, on a site where several smaller buildings once stood. Earlier this year, Frontier Realty, a large residential developer, filed plans with the Department of Buildings to demolish two pairs of decaying row houses that it owns on the avenue, one set near 85th Street, the other near 96th Street.

To limit further development, a group of residents calling themselves the West End Preservation Society will ask the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission to consider designating a 37-block stretch of the avenue, from 70th to 107th Streets, as a historic district.

"West End Avenue is of a piece from where the apartment houses begin, around 69th Street, to where the avenue ends," said Andrew Dolkart, a professor of historic preservation at [Columbia University](#), who was hired by the group to write a report on the buildings in question. "It really is a uniform, cohesive boulevard that could meet the criteria for a historic district."

The plan is supported by all of the neighborhood's local, state and federal representatives, who wrote to the mayor in March supporting the plan. On June 3, Community Board 7 will consider a resolution supporting the proposal. The decision ultimately rests with the landmarks commission and the City Council.

This is not the first time that preservationists have sought such a district: in March 2006, for example, the preservation group Landmark West asked the commission — to no avail — to consider designating roughly 11 blocks of upper West End Avenue. With more political support and more development, preservationists hope for success this time.

Two existing historic districts protect several blocks of the avenue that are especially rich in row houses: from 76th to 77th Streets, and from 87th to 94th Streets. But according to Mosette Broderick, an architectural historian at [New York University](#) who said she was "loosely attached" to the neighborhood group, the need to preserve West End's more pedestrian stretches is more urgent today.

“We never imagined that New York would boom the way it has,” Ms. Broderick said.

Of the proposed district, she added: “Are the Taj Mahal and the White House in it? No. It’s upper-middle-class housing. But it’s of a piece, and it’s unique.”

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