

Museum Seeks A New Building On W. 76th St.

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

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Historical's Society Plan for Apartments Fought

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The New-York Historical Society wants to construct an apartment building behind and, perhaps, partly above its museum and library on Central Park West.

Society officials and the developer of the property, on West 76th Street, got a hostile reaction last night from 100 neighborhood residents who packed a basement room in the West Side Y.M.C.A. to hear the proposal.

The shape and size of the building have not been set, but it could rise to 20 stories and include space for the society's use. It is planned that the structure would be built within existing zoning regulations.

The structure's base would be on a 100-by-125-foot lot, at the rear of the main building, which the society bought in 1937. The only structure there now is a derelict brownstone.

Engineering Studies Begun

Robert C. Quinlan, the Upper West Side developer overseeing the project, said the museum could add 292,000 square feet of space to its site within existing zoning limitations.

"That space can be distributed in various ways," Mr. Quinlan said. "Nobody yet knows which way best to distribute it." However, he said, the building would be oriented toward Central Park West to avoid the more restrictive midblock zoning.

He said engineering studies are being made to determine whether columns might run through shafts in the existing building, permitting the new structure



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The site, behind the New-York Historical Society on West 76th Street, of a planned 20-story apartment building.

to be built partly over the 75-foot-high museum.

When asked at last night's meeting what benefits the community would gain from the project, Mr. Quinlan began by saying, "For one thing, the density in that area is very low."

This prompted Assemblyman Jerrold Nadler, Democrat of Manhattan, who was in the crowd, to reply, "I have never before heard of a developer brag that he was going to add to density."

Robert G. Goelet, president of the 179-year-old society, said the organization had turned to development because

"frankly, it is badly in need of income." He estimated the society's annual losses at about \$500,000 to \$700,000. "You can't keep that up indefinitely," he said.

"The trustees decided that the one asset they had that was nonproducing was the land they owned and the development rights which ran with it," Mr. Goelet said. "It seemed to us that this could provide an important source of capital and would also possibly solve our space problems."

But a number of speakers questioned how seriously the society had pursued

other fund-raising efforts, particularly after Mr. Goelet noted that most of his organization's operating expenses were met by its endowment income, and not from earned income.

The New-York Historical Society building — whose earliest colonnaded, granite section dates to 1903-08 — is a city landmark. And the development site lies within the Central Park West-76th Street Historic District.

Because of this, the final proposal would have to be approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.