Proposed Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard-St. Nicholas Avenue Historic District



Left: West 114th Street between Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Frederick Douglass Boulevards.

Photo: Melanie Nanez

The boundaries of spatula-shaped proposed Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard–St. Nicholas Avenue Historic District run north to south on Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard from West 110th –124th Streets; east to west on the north from Malcolm X Boulevard to Frederick Douglass Boulevard at West 115th Street, and on the south from Malcolm X Boulevard to Frederick Douglass Boulevard at West 110th Street.

The proposed Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard–St. Nicholas Avenue Historic District consists of row houses, apartment buildings, and churches, primarily from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The area was owned by the Benson family and was sold and plotted in 1851. With the construction of the elevated train line to West 125th Street in 1878, development began in earnest. The building in the proposed district consists of apartment buildings, four-story row houses, and five-story, 25 foot-wide mansion-sized rowhouses.

Notable buildings in the proposed District include:

Mount Nebo Baptist Church, formerly The Ansche Chesed Synagogue, located at 1883 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. Designed in Classical Revival style by Beaux Arts- trained Jewish architect Edward I. Shire, the synagogue was constructed between 1908 and1909. In 1927, the building was purchased by a group of Vincentian priests and became Our Lady of the Miraculous. In1979, Mount Nebo Baptist Church bought the building from Our Lady of the Miraculous. David Dunlap notes in his New York Times article, "Vestiges of Harlem's Jewish Past," that the Ansche Chesed Synagogue is one of only two known religious buildings to serve all of New York City's three major faiths: Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant, which is represented by religious iconography from all three faiths in the building's interior." The building is listed on the State and National Registries of Historic Places.

<u>First Corinthian Baptist Church</u>, formerly the Regent Theater, located at 1906–1916 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. Designed by architect Thomas W. Lamb in the Spanish–Moorish style, and constructed between 1912 and 1913, the building is one of New York City's most significant surviving early motion picture theater buildings. The building is a New York City designated landmark.

Graham Court Apartments located at 1923–1937 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. Designed by the architectural firm Clinton & Russell for William Waldorf Astor, the building was erected between 1899 and 1901. The Italian Renaissance style building was one of New York City's early luxury apartment buildings, with elevator service and an interior courtyard. The large apartments with servant's quarters were finished with the finest materials. The building was featured in the movies New Jack City and Jungle Fever. Graham Court Apartments is a New York City designated landmark.

Harry Belafonte 115th Street Branch Library located at 203 West 115th Street.

The library is one of the 67 libraries built in New York City through a gift from steel baron and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The Renaissance Revival style limestone building was designed by McKim, Mead & White, arguably America's most influential architectural firm. The building is listed on the State and National Registries of Historic Places, and is a New York City designated landmark. McKim, Mead & White designed hundreds of buildings and structures across America, including the Brooklyn Museum, 10 New York City public libraries, the Washington Square Park Arch, and the original, demolished Pennsylvania Railroad station on Seventh Avenue between West 31st –33rd Streets. The demolition of Pennsylvania station in 1963 led to passage of the NYC Landmarks Law in April 1965, and the creation of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The West 114th Street Historic District (aka the Randolph Houses, named for labor and civil rights activist A. Philip Randolf) located at Nos. 214 to 243 West 114th Street between Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Frederick Douglass Boulevards. The District consists of 37 tenement buildings with 455 apartments, known as the Randolph Houses, and the Wadleigh High School for Girls. The five-story, Renaissance Revival style tenement buildings were constructed between 1895 and 1899. The West 114th Historic District is listed on the State and National Registries of Historic Places.

Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing & Visual Arts, formerly Wadleigh High School for Girls, located at 215 West 114th Street. It was designed by architect and Superintendent of School Buildings C. B. J. Snyder, in the French Renaissance architectural style, and constructed between 1901 and 1902. When it opened, the school had 80 classrooms, more than a dozen laboratories, executive offices, three gymnasiums, a library, a large boiler and engine room, two study halls, and numerous lavatories and cloak rooms. The school also had two electric elevators, the first of their kind in public school buildings in the city. The New York Times declared that these interior innovations made it "the greatest school in the world." The building was named for Lydia F. Wadleigh, a pioneer in the movement of higher education for women. The building is listed on the State and National Registries of Historic Places, and is a New York City designated landmark.