

## Proposed Manhattan Avenue Historic District



*Left: 329 West 112th Street at the corner of Manhattan Avenue. Photo: Melanie Nanez*

The proposed Manhattan Avenue Historic District consists of Nos. 6 to 50 on the east side of Morningside Avenue; Nos. 345 to 437 on the west side of Manhattan Avenue; Nos. 244 to 246 and Nos. 406 to 440 on the east side of Manhattan Avenue; Nos. 360 to 364 on the south side of West 119<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 365 to 359 on the north side of West 118<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 346 to 370 on the south side of West 118<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 303 to 369 on the north side of West 117<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 302 to 366 on the south side of West 117<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 303 to 367 on the north side of West 116<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 306 to 374 on the south side of West 116<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 307 to 359 on at the north side of West 115<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 308 to 352 on the south side of West 115<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 303 to 317 on the north side of 114<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 302 to 308 and Nos. 312 to 316 on the south side of West 14<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 307 to 317 on the north side of West 113<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 308 to 334 on the south side of West 113<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 305 to 329 on the north side of West 112<sup>th</sup> Street; Nos. 302 to 314 on the south side of West 112<sup>th</sup> Street; and Nos. 303 to 311 on the north side of West 111<sup>th</sup> Street.

During the latter 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, speculative real estate development changed from rowhouses to luxury elevator apartment buildings for the middle and upper-middles classes, and walk-up tenement buildings for the working class.

An article in the February 11, 1899, edition of the *Real Estate Records and Builder's Guide* states, "Four years ago, the only considerable section of undeveloped cheap land remaining below 125<sup>th</sup> St., was the district immediately north of the park between 110<sup>th</sup> and 125<sup>th</sup> Streets, Morningside and Park Avenues. Consequently, the section has been the chief seat of extraordinary building movement in the intervening four years. From January 1895 to August 1898, 744 flats (apartment buildings) and 209 dwellings (row houses) were projected in the district...The flats were, with few exceptions, five-story structures...In the district rents are high and tenants plentiful. The improvements which have been major in the past four years have caused the prices of land to rise 25 to 30%. There remain about 1,000 vacant lots. These

comprise a majority of the most desirable sites in the district, by reason of the tendency of builders to develop the cheaper land first. Much of the unimproved land is still offered for sale, at prices which will ensure a profit to builders of five-story flats. But an increasing portion of it is held at figures which preclude profit on improvements of this nature. It is this circumstance which is compelling the erection of six- and seven-elevator flats, with frontages of 28 or 30 feet.”

The proposed Historic District is primarily comprised of five- to seven- story apartment buildings constructed between 1900 and 1905. Small groups of row houses on Manhattan Avenue and the numbered streets were constructed in the late 1800s. Architectural styles for apartment buildings are Colonial Revival, Beaux-Arts, Neo-Renaissance, and Romanesque Revival, reflecting design trends of the period. The row houses are mostly Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival style. Both styles use a mix of building materials and surface textures, the popular style in the late 1880s as tastes changed from the neo-Grec and Italianate brownstones.

Due to disinvestment in Harlem by the New York City and commercial enterprises, many landlords abandoned their buildings. By the end of the 1980s, more than 50 percent of buildings in the proposed District were owned by the City of New York. Many buildings stood vacant and neglected. Despite this neglect, the architectural integrity of the buildings in the proposed District remains intact.