

The New York Times

REAL ESTATE

Wedged and Softened to Fit in on the Upper West Side

The High End

By KIM VELSEY DEC. 16, 2016



The Naftali Group's building at 210 West 77th Street, with its cascading terraces, replaced a parking garage.

Thomas Juul-Hansen

Bordered by two of the city's largest parks, with some of its best schools and a wealth of good transportation options, homes on the Upper West Side are typically in high demand. The only thing missing — at least in the eyes of developers — has been land to build on.

With two historic districts hampering opportunities for ground-up new development, most projects to come to market in recent years have been conversions of existing rentals. But even as development sites remain rare in the neighborhood, about a half dozen projects are now rising on the sites of former parking garages, retail buildings, a landmark district rowhouse and even, in one case, atop an existing rental building.

“The Upper West Side was so heavy on conversions, and conversions are still happening, but there's a lot more ground-up right now,” said the Stribling and Associates broker Alexa Lambert. She added that for a while, the Naftali Group project she is head of sales for, at 210 West 77th Street, was the only one of its kind in the neighborhood, with the exception of the Riverside Center high-rises.

Both 210 West 77th and its sister project at 221 West 77th Street replaced parking garages that Naftali snapped up for \$55 million and \$61 million in 2013 and 2014 — the first was so sought-after that a monthlong bidding war drove up the price by \$10 million.



Anbau's 13-story condo tower at 207 West 79th Street was designed by Morris Adjmi.

Rather than emphasize the buildings' newness, however, the architect Thomas Juul-Hansen muted it, softening their clean, contemporary lines with prewar touches like Juliet balconies and terraced setbacks. The building at 210 West 77th features a brick and bronze exterior with mahogany French doors, while 221 West 77th has casement windows set into precast stone.

"The Upper West Side is so texture-y and neighborhood-y, it always seemed like such a disconnect to me when developers threw up glass towers," Ms. Lambert said.

The preference for prewar is even more evident at the Chamberlain, an Art Deco-inspired tower at 269 West 87th Street designed by FXFowle. The 39-unit building, which is being developed by Simon Baron Development and Quadrum Global, has a brick and masonry exterior with decorative ironwork, wraparound corner windows with vertical casements and, like the Naftali buildings, Juliet balconies and multiple setbacks that will be used as private terraces.

"They didn't want a building that would feel like a cacophony on the Upper West Side," said Ann Froelich, an associate real estate broker at Douglas Elliman, which is handling sales at the project.

Another project, the Haswell, at 707 West End Avenue, took a far more unorthodox approach: The 64-unit condo is rising above and around a 1950s rent-stabilized apartment building.



The Chamberlain, an Art Deco-inspired tower at 269 West 87th Street designed by FXFowle. Williams NY

“Our project was envisioned as a way to both preserve rental housing, while delivering positive growth in the form of new housing,” said Paul Boardman, principal at P2B Ventures, which is developing the project with SJP Properties. The development will feature 9,000 square feet of communal terrace and garden space and half of the units will have private outdoor terraces.

Whereas developers elsewhere in the city have responded to the cooling luxury market by offering smaller, less-expensive units, those who manage to snag spots on the Upper West Side have been taking the opposite tack, building larger units with higher-end finishes. Brokers cite the neighborhood’s popularity with families and buyers’ sharpening discernment in a softer market.

“I think that developers realized that the market was going to be crowded,” Ms. Lambert said. “Whatever price sector they’re building for, they now know they have to do a little bit better.”

Both the Chamberlain and 221 West 77th, for example, have half-court basketball courts. The Chamberlain, where apartments range from a \$2.5 million two-bedroom to a \$13 million penthouse, also features Alexandra Champalimaud interiors with hand-laid oak floors, Kohler “Tea-for-Two” cast-iron soaking tubs and kitchens with marble backsplashes that extend from countertop to ceiling.

Anbau Enterprises is developing a 13-story condo tower at 207 West 79th Street, designed by Morris Adjmi Architects, that falls within the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District. Anbau’s managing director, Barbara van Beuren, said that she had discovered that working with landmark districts produced a better and more contextual building.

“There’s more uncertainty in doing a building in a landmarks district, but we believe that design is one of the most important things in real estate, and in our mind it just makes a more valuable building,” Ms. van Beuren said. “Buyers, in my experience, may not be able to articulate why they like or don’t like a design, but they intuitively know when it’s good.”

A version of this article appears in print on December 18, 2016, on Page RE10 of the New York edition with the headline: Wedged and Softened to Fit In on the Upper West Side. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe