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Style Meets Substance on New Upper West Side Towers

Two buildings going up have contemporary touches while echoing an older generation of grand apartments

By JOSH BARBANEL

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People who live on the Upper West Side have long had a reputation for being more artsy and even Bohemian than, say, their Upper East Side counterparts. But they love their Upper West Side just as it is, thank you.



A rendering of the Chamberlain, a 17-story apartment tower under construction at 269 W. 87th St. on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

PHOTO: WILLIAMS NY

The latest architectural evidence for this proposition comes from two apartment towers under construction in the heart of the neighborhood.

These aren't the angled, glass towers of Hudson Verde or the stacked designs of lower Manhattan. Instead, they are stately echoes of an older generation of grand apartment buildings that line Central Park West, but with contemporary flourishes.

At the Chamberlain, a 17-story tower that will

replace a parking garage at 269 W. 87th St., Dan Kaplan, a senior partner at FXFOWLE Architects, said the new building was modeled after groundbreaking art deco buildings. He cited the Majestic and the Century on Central Park West that went up in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

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details: intricately patterned brick; cast stone; and decorative ironwork. Vertical fins protrude off the facade and point upward toward four floors that step toward the center of the building, much as towers of larger art deco buildings of old.



207W79, also under construction on the Upper West Side PHOTO: MOSO STUDIO

“We channeled the spirit of the art deco apartment house in this new building,” he said. “We did it with a contemporary overlay.”

The building is on a 100-foot-wide lot just outside a historic district. Yet it is faced with contextual

On one side, the Chamberlain has wraparound corner glass casement windows similar to those found at the Century. This time it provides views of the Hudson River over the top of the low-rise building next door.

Interior features are strongly contemporary. Elaborate kitchens and bathrooms are finished in stone designed by Alexandra Champalimaud. There is a half-size basketball court, which doubles as a screening

room, and a gym. Both the gym and the court have glass walls facing a rear garden.

The other new building is on West 79th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue and is to go by the name 207W79. It will rise 13 stories and have 19 apartments. It will replace a plain, red-brick apartment house.

It will have a symmetrical layout, with a base of three stories of limestone, and brick above. Vertical terra-cotta panels with a floral motif will be set between the casement windows. “We were trying to recall some of the old apartment buildings that are so beautiful up there,” said Morris Adjmi, the principal of Morris Adjmi Architects.

The final design of 207W79 was shaped around the preferences of the city Landmarks Preservation Commission. After the commission questioned the original design, the main entrance was shifted from the side to the center of the building. A penthouse also was stripped from the roof to make sure the building wasn’t taller than the 1904 beaux-arts Lucerne Hotel next door. A stack of balconies was removed and replaced with wraparound windows with a view toward the Hudson.

Mr. Adjmi said the public design process made the building better. “It might have been more modern before,” he said, but added that “this more sober approach makes sense.”

These Upper West Side buildings were shaped in part by so-called contextual zoning rules, adopted in response to complaints about oversize buildings permitted under zoning changes instituted for most of the West Side in 1984. They eventually extended north, on many streets as far as West 110th Street, following complaints about other tall towers.



A rendering of the Chamberlain PHOTO: WILLIAMS NY

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Andrew Dolkart, a professor of historic preservation at Columbia University, said that despite the removal of the balconies at 207W79, it was still “clearly a 21st-century building.”

“Contextual does not need to mean faux old, you can have a contemporary design,” he said.

The Chamberlain is a co-op because the land under the building is in a 99-year lease, said Matthew Baron, president of Simon Baron Development, which is developing the property with Quadrum Global. Listed prices range from \$2.55 million for a two-bedroom apartment to \$6.8 million for a four-bedroom duplex townhouse with a rear garden.



A rendering of a 13-story building called 207W79, now under construction. PHOTO: MOSO STUDIO

At 207W79, condominium prices will range from about \$3.9 million to more than \$12 million when a sales office opens in the next few weeks, according to Stephen Glascock, president of Anbau Enterprises, which is developing the condo.

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