(PROPOSED) PARK AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

Park Avenue, North from 79th Street

The proposed Park Avenue Historic District consists of approximately 68 buildings from 79th to 96th Street in Manhattan. Park Avenue is significant as a residential boulevard where some of New York's finest apartment houses were constructed in the early decades of the 20th century. The buildings, mostly high-rise apartment houses designed in the popular Revival styles of the time, are attributed to some of the most well-known apartment house architects of the era, including J.E.R. Carpenter, Emery Roth, George & Edward Blum, Rosario Candela, George F. Pelham, Schwartz & Gross, and Robert T. Lyons. The proposed historic district also encompasses a small number of low-rise residential buildings, early-20th century mansions, institutional buildings, and mid-20th century apartment buildings, all which contribute to the historic and architectural character of the corridor.

Park Avenue was developed as a single corridor, beginning at 42nd Street and terminating at 96th Street. The road was initially laid out as Fourth Avenue in the 1811 Commissioner's Plan of New York, at a time when the northern parts of Manhattan were only very sparsely settled. In 1831, Cornelius Vanderbilt's New York & Harlem Railroad was chartered, bringing trains to the corridor. The at-grade railroad tracks made for hazardous and unpleasant conditions, worsened by the introduction of steam locomotion in 1837. The Panic of 1857 and the Civil War further worked to forestall development along Park Avenue. It was not until after 1865, spurred by a wave of immigration and, later, by the 1871 opening of the first Grand Central Terminal, that development began in earnest. The sinking of the railroad tracks in 1877 especially helped to spur the construction of modest row houses, tenements, flats, institutional, and religious structures – some of which remain today. Yet development continued to be stifled by the noise and dirt from the largely uncovered trains. It was not until the line was electrified in 1907 and the tunnel covered and landscaped with a grassy mall that Park Avenue was finally transformed into a truly desirable boulevard, attracting the more upscale residential development, including mansions and large apartment houses, for which its rival, Fifth Avenue, was already well known. The landscaped mall would become Park Avenue's signature element, thereby assuring this corridor's prominence among New York's great urban boulevards.

Today, Park Avenue from 79th to 96th Street is primarily a street of high-quality 11- to 17-story apartment houses built between 1907 and 1930. There are also survivors from earlier eras, including a 19th-century tenement building at 957 Park Avenue (c. 1895), two early-20th century mansions (1015 Park Avenue, 1914 by Ernest Flagg and 1025 Park Avenue, 1911-12 by John Russell Pope, both designated New York City landmarks), and several institutional and religious structures including the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola complex (a designated New York City landmark). Despite large-scale window replacements, the buildings in the proposed area retain a high degree of architectural integrity, with only a small percentage of ornament removal and penthouse additions. The corridor continues to be known globally as a premier residential street.