

Primary Sites in Morningside Heights Vulnerable to Overdevelopment

Prepared by:

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to draw urgent attention to the potential for overdevelopment of many “at risk” sites that threatens to change forever the face of Morningside Heights.

From new apartments at the Enclave on the grounds of St. John the Divine on West 113th Street to the four former St. Luke’s Hospital buildings across the street, to high-rise luxury towers going up at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) and Union Theological Seminary (UTS), our neighborhood has already been uniquely targeted by developers taking advantage of outdated zoning regulations that enable “as-of-right” construction and unfettered acquisition of “air rights.”

Recently completed new and rehabilitated housing and projects in active planning, such as JTS and UTS towers, will contain close to 1,200 apartments, of which only 7% will be affordable, all in the Enclave project at the Cathedral. We, and many in the community, believe that the already built and proposed new structures are wildly out of context with the surrounding neighborhood, impose stress on our already beleaguered infrastructure, and displace long-established small businesses. We are concerned that new and proposed luxury rental and condo buildings will exert market pressure for local landlords to evict working-class and middle-class tenants who comprise the college-town fabric of our distinct area.

We recognize and support the benefits of reasonable increased development density to provide affordable housing that will ensure new and current working-class and middle-class families a stable home. And we also strive to preserve the urban charm, historic institutions, and college-town lifestyle of Morningside, which developers also recognize as a highly attractive neighborhood for significant investment. We are seeking planning and zoning solutions that support the following objectives:

- Building heights consistent with nearby buildings
- Exteriors that harmonize with surrounding buildings
- Preservation of landmark views
- Mitigation of impact on the environment and local services
- Provision of affordable housing
- Support of local social and economic development
- Rezoning of Morningside Heights to encourage appropriate development

- Well-paid construction jobs, training, and opportunities for local businesses

Vulnerable “Soft Sites” for Overdevelopment

In order to work from a common understanding of the areas that are “at risk” for overdevelopment in Morningside, we have researched and compiled a list of “soft sites,” selected because they have one or more of the following distinctions: “low rise,” “tenant free,” “non-residential,” “vacant” and/or with available “air rights” “sufficient lot size for development”-- enabling developers to erect large towers inconsistent with the surrounding area, and create luxury rentals and condos beyond the affordability of our community.

The following data was obtained from the City Register (ACRIS); online articles and real estate information web sites; discussions with local representatives and with local merchants; and our own observations at site visits.

Based on a sampling of property reports, all applicable sites within this Morningside Heights area are assumed to be Zoned R-8, with commercial overlay C1-4, and with an allowed FAR of 6.02.



(1.)*TD Bank and American Apparel (VACANT) -- 2831

Broadway (NW corner 109th Street along Broadway)

Block 1893

Lot 43

Most recent recorded

deed: 4/27/2016 -- Party 1, TD

Bank and Party 2, The Dime Savings Bank of Williamsburgh, but there is

also a 4/27/2016 deed to 2825 Broadway LLC (No further info found). Along with the adjacent Rite Aid site, this entire block, comprised of three one-story commercial sites, is at risk for overdevelopment.



(2.) *Rite Aid -- 2853 Broadway

(SW corner 110th Street)

Block 1893

Lot 50

(Note: Formerly Sloan's Supermarket -- property remained with Sloan family real estate ownership)

Most recent recorded

deed: 4/13/11 -- CKMR Corporation F/K/A Sloan's Supermarkets, Inc., 2 Bennet

Avenue, New York, NY 10033 -- 212 795 5600. Large, one-story corner site at risk for overdevelopment, along with entire block.

***Note:** Though the TD Bank, and vacant American Apparel are separate ownership and Lot from the Rite Aid, the contiguous storefronts and Lots could be combined to form an entire, block-long development along Broadway.



(3.) Congregation Ramath Orah Synagogue – 550 W. 110th Street
Block 1881

Lot 56

Built in 1921 in the Neo-Georgian style as the Westside Unitarian Church, the congregation was founded in 1942, and has been nominated (6/12/2015) by Gov. Cuomo to the State and National Registry of Historic Places.

Most recent deed recorded:

8/28/2007 – Congregation Ramath Orah. However, an Agreement also dated 8/28/2007 cites The

Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York.

Note: According to Meeting Notes from a Land Use Committee hearing in 2000, regarding variances for Columbia to construct a 12-story school and retail outlet adjacent to the Synagogue (which they proceeded to develop), “The applicant plans to use these development rights to develop the proposed building -- the unused development rights associated with the neighboring Lot 56 (Congregation Ramath Orah Synagogue) which rights are owned by the applicant (Columbia).”

Soft Site? – It would seem that Columbia has already used the Synagogue air rights, but if not, the site would be attractive to a developer who could offer to house a new Synagogue within a modern tower, unless the proposed historic designation (not yet granted) prohibits destruction of the site.



(4.) Banco Popular -- 2852

Broadway (SE corner 111th Street) -
- (slated for demolition, according to Assemblymember Dan O'Donnell)
Block 1882

Lot 61

Most recent recorded deed:

6/2/2016- Urban-Scape LLC, Wells Fargo Bank as Trustee

Urban-Scape LLC (not to be confused

with Chicago corporation of same name), owned by Eddie Mizrahi (no further information found). Columbia offices also located in building.

Additional Background: Low-rise site is next to building with commercial space and tenants (4 stories) housing Koronet Pizza and Mel's Burger, owned by Lawrence Friedland, chairman of Friedland Properties (whose website reports owning over 100 properties). It would seem air rights could be obtained from Friedland to build a high-rise at site, and is therefore at risk for overdevelopment.



(5.) Citibank Site -- 2861 Broadway (NW corner 111th Street) -- **VACANT**, closed since January 2014 fire completely destroyed site.

Block 1894

Lot 47

Most recent recorded deed:

4/30/2014 -- Elizabeth Hutchins, Co-Executor

Additional Background: The property has been in the Hutchins family since 1971, perhaps earlier. Hutchins, along with her husband R. Alastair Short, inherited property from her

father. According to Assemblymember Dan O'Donnell, Citibank, the lessee, is responsible for re-building the site, but initially had wanted to purchase the building and perhaps neighboring building air rights (2867 Broadway, and adjacent buildings) to develop a taller structure. However, the owners prefer to continue to lease the site to Citibank. Current plans are for a modest, low-rise bank site, similar to previous. O'Donnell has confirmation of Citibank tentative plans: Phase I: Oct. thru Dec 2016 – Demolition, Scaffolding, Façade Restoration; Phase II: Dec. through July 2017 – Rooftop, Infrastructure; Phase III: July through Dec. 2017 – Build new branch. Site still at risk for overdevelopment until the rebuilding of the previous type of site is confirmed as underway. A job filing for Demolition was listed 9/9/16.



(6.) Samad Deli and The Heights (upstairs restaurant) -- 2867 Broadway (between 111th - 112th Street, Westside)

Block 1894

Lot 49

Most recent recorded deed: 3/12/2012 -- Miriam Jochnowitz, and Carol Jochnowitz, Executrix, inherited from Ruth Fink.

Note: According to Samad owner/manager, store is on month-to-month lease, and "real estate people"

were taking pictures and "looking around". Site still at risk for overdevelopment, depending on plans for the former Citibank site.



(7.) The former Vareli Restaurant (VACANT) -- 2869

Broadway (between 111th-112th Street, Westside)

Block 1894

Lot 50

Most recent recorded deed: 6/13/2012 -- ZOI Realty.

Note: Site is owned by Zoitass family, owners of Westside Market. The former Vareli restaurant was owned and operated by the son of George Zoitass. Spotted online ad in May 2016 for leasing site at \$30K/month, but site remains vacant. Still at risk for overdevelopment.



(8.) 2875 Broadway (aka 600 West 112th Street -- SW corner)

Block 1894

Lot 52

Most recent recorded deed: 10/30/2003

-- Longfellow Properties, Inc. and Lillian Seril (Party 2)

Note: Site has the following retail

storefronts: Pinkberry, Possibilities -- a party notions store, Chase Bank, a small VACANT storefront, and a large VACANT storefront on the corner (the former Bank Street Book Store). Building also has upstairs office tenants, including The Columbia Spectator, the student newspaper of Columbia University.

Note: Longfellow is a real estate company operated by Barbara and Pearl Seril, the daughters of the original owner, Lillian Seril, who died in 2004. Seril once owned THE BELNORD, 225 W. 86th Street, the site of a highly contentious rent strike in the 1970s. Barbara Seril is currently registered as an attorney with an office at the Longfellow Properties location, 30 East 76th Street, Floor 4, New York, NY 10021. 212 327 0011.

NOTE: This 2875 Broadway corner block site, along with the Citibank corner site, is optimal for overdevelopment when air rights of adjacent sites are obtained, possibly across the entire 111th-112th Westside block.



(9.) Community Garden -- known as The Peoples Garden -- 1036

Amsterdam Avenue at 111th Street

Block 1883

Lot 28

Most recent recorded

deed: 10/18/2004 -- City of New York

Note: Local community activists won

permanent "garden status" and approval from City Planning in 1985.

Soft Site? Would require change of status from City.



(10.) Parking Lot -- 506 W.

112th Street

Block 1883

Lot 38

Most recent recorded deed:

7/16/2010 -- Ecumenical

Community Housing

Opportunities, Phipps

Affordable II Housing

Development

The Parking Lot is adjacent to

508 W. 112th Street, a small

apartment building owned by

Nunz Realty, and it is also

adjacent to 1050 Amsterdam

Avenue. 1050 is a 100%

affordable housing facility

primarily for senior citizens, called Echo Apartments, and is owned by Phipps Affordable Housing (Phipps House), which is affiliated with the Sunnyside Development (a large affordable housing project voted down by Councilmember Van Bramer) and develops/manages many affordable housing apartment buildings throughout New York. Even though the Parking Lot is owned by a business entity that relies on government funding to support development of affordable housing, Phipps may be free to use air rights from adjacent buildings (508 owned by Nunz, and 1050 Amsterdam, owned and/or operated by Phipps itself) to construct a "non-contextual" mid-block tower.



(11.) Book Culture and Post Office --
 536 W. 112th Street
 Block 1883
 Lot 54
 Most recent recorded deed: 8/27/2013
 -- Party 1, NYC Dept. of Transportation,
 Party 2, The Trustees of Columbia
 University in City of NY
 Note: Low-rise two-story structure
 Possible risk for overdevelopment if
 Columbia decides to proceed.



**(12.) 611 W. 112th Street (The
 Maranamay) -- VACANT AND
 SHUTTERED**
 Block 1895
 Lot 8
 Most recent recorded deed: 3/7/2006 --
 Party 1, 611 Realty Co, Party 2, 611 W
 112 St Realty Corp., P.O. Box 20570,
 New York, NY 10017 718 275 8001
 Note: The Maranamay, built in 1924,
 had been a charming 6-story residence

with large window awnings, as depicted in an original sales brochure from the NY Public Library archive. More recently, it functioned as "Colonial House," an SRO residence, according to the Columbia Spectator, and has been cited with numerous code violations. The owner of 611 Realty is Mark Hersh, a landlord with multiple Westside properties and other SROs, who was reported to have evicted tenants by force. The fortunes of Westside real estate skyrocketed, and Hersh claims that he was prohibited from renovating because he required a special permit called a "certificate of no harassment," according to a 2006 Village Voice article. Again, based on most recent deed filed, Hersh still owns property. Soft Site? -- A renovated Maranamay could become a luxury Co-op, or it could be demolished (however, unlikely since it fits within the projected Historic District). At this time, site seems to be in limbo.



(13.) 113th Street Play Garden* -- 520
 W. 113th Street -- contact John Arbo 212
 865 0497 (based on web page)
 No Block and Lot available
 Managed by the 113th Street Block
 Association
 Note: In 1998, Columbia decided not to
 develop the site and instead funded

playground improvements, at the urging of the community, according to the Columbia Spectator.

Soft Site? -- This site likely remains owned by Columbia, who perhaps could decide to develop. No official "park" designation found in records.



(14.) 514 W. 113th Street*

Block 1884

Lot 42

Adjacent to the 113th Street Play Garden, this low-rise structure houses Columbia offices. No deed is found in the City Register. The property is cited as belonging to The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York.

*Note: Columbia could combine this Lot with the adjacent Play Garden to develop the site, if they chose to proceed.



(15.) Parking Lot – Between 605 and 613 W. 113th Street

Block 1895

Lot 52

Most recent deed: 4/10/1981, Party 1 - Columbia University City of New York, Party 2 – State of New York

Description: Large, square lot with chain link fence and Reserved Parking only with permit.

Note: No Block or Lot attributed

directly to the Parking Lot, only to 607 W. 113th Street, as “Entire Lot.” The 113th Street lot is adjacent to a smaller rectangular vacant lot on 114th Street (possibly another individual site at risk) that could be combined into one large through-block site. Assume Parking Lots are owned by Columbia and it can develop each site, or combination of the two sites, if it chooses to proceed.



(16.) Columbia University Parking Lot and St. Luke's Building

– West 115th Street through to West 114th including 411 W. 114th Street

Block 1867

Lot 9

Most recent recorded deed: 10/30/02 – Party 1 -- St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, and Party 2 – Trustees of Columbia University in City of NY, and Consent

– 10/30/2002, Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, and United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. The site consists of two parts: a parking lot along W. 115th owned by Columbia, and 411 W. 114th leased to St. Luke's and owned by Columbia..

Possible scenario: According to Columbia, the entire site may be slated for a 21-story building that would use air-rights from the adjacent Notre Dame church, and a zoning bonus for providing community facilities. The proposed building would be 300K sq ft, and Columbia has indicated that it could be used as an undergraduate residence.



Additionally, the adjacent parking lot along 115th Street could be at risk for overdevelopment as a separate site. It is used solely by Columbia University for their vehicles and storage. The entire parking lot site combined with the Columbia 114th Street building (along with the possible church air

rights) currently leased to St. Luke's, are all at risk for overdevelopment in roughly two years should Columbia decide to proceed when St. Luke's lease for 411 W. 114th Street expires.



(17.) 415 W. 120th Street

Block 1963

Lot 9

Most recent recorded deed:

2/18/2016 – Assignment of Leases and Rents, 415 West 120th Holdings LLC, and Deed: 2/18/2016, Party 1 – The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), and Party 2 – 415 West 120th Street Holdings LLC

This residential building was recently sold by JTS, and is currently undergoing asbestos removal.

Originally “The Devinclare Residence for Self-Supporting Women”, built of Harvard brick and Indiana limestone,

was a gift to the Roman Catholic Church.

Note: 415 West 120th Holdings LLC is owned/managed by the Orbach Group, 707 Palisades Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 201-242-4800. Orbach paid \$19 Million for the 5-story site, and owns multiple Westside properties including 929-971 Amsterdam Avenue, and 354 Cathedral Parkway. Orbach has been cited in articles for encouraging current tenants to leave in order to make room for higher-paying Columbia students.



(18.) GMC Parking Garage – 532 W.

122nd Street

Block 1976

Lot 56

Note: No deed listed in City Register, but Property is cited as belonging to Trustees of Columbia University. Recently, Westside garages have become highly attractive “soft sites” for developers. This particular garage is situated on the opposite side of the street from the new Jewish Theological Seminary luxury tower, under development by the Savanna Group, and is at risk for overdevelopment.



**(19.) Parking Lot and Garage –
500 Riverside Drive**

(International House rear on
Claremont Ave.)

Block 1994

Lot 57

Most recent recorded deed –
5/1/96 - Dormitory Authority of
New York State

Soft Site? – Though there is
currently no construction permit
on record, and the parking
provisions may be mandated

under zoning laws, this expansive space may be vulnerable to developers seeking a
prime location.



(20.) 3060 Broadway

Block 1976

Lot 1

Most recent recorded deed:

2/10/2016 – Party 1, The Jewish
Theological Seminary of America --
Party 2, 3060 Broadway Property

We understand that JTS has sold the
site to 3060 Broadway Property LLC,
but reserves the right to use the
property as dormitory housing for its
students for a period of four years,
until the new JTS housing facility on
122nd Street is ready for occupancy.

Note: 3060 Broadway Property is
owned/managed by Coltown
Properties, headed by Steven

Neuman and Israel Weinberger. According to a 6/19/2015 Village Voice article, *A Manhattan Landlord Is Evicting An Entire Block of Latino Business Owners*, Coltown, as co-owners, gave 8 businesses 30 days' notice to vacate along 162nd-163rd Streets and Broadway, after raising the rents to unaffordable rates. Some had been in the neighborhood over 40 years. Councilmember Mark Levine intervened. Levine is quoted as saying that he's seen this scenario play out time and again across the city: Landlords raise the rent on commercial tenants, the tenants can't pay and are forced to move out, chain stores and restaurants move in, and the local fabric of the community is destroyed. With Coltown Properties' track record, it would seem that 3060 Broadway is ultimately at risk of overdevelopment. In jeopardy are 5 mom-and-pop stores, including the Olive Tree Deli, the Broadway Au Lait Café, Columbia

Cleaners, a barbershop and a copy shop that are part of the fabric of the neighborhood and provide important services.



(21.) McDonalds -- 600 W. 125th Street*
Block 1995
Lot 26
Most recent recorded deed: 7/12/2004 -- Party 1, The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of NY, Party 2, McDonald's Corporation
McDonald's is on the corner with a large parking lot.



(22.) 614, 620, 622, 624 W. 125th Street (Abandoned)*
Block 1995
Lot 40
This line of several crudely built delivery docks sits adjacent to the McDonalds Lot, and is listed as "inactive/dissolution" as of 9/23/1992, having been incorporated on 11/05/1980 by

Santagelo & Cohen, 253 Broadway, NY. NY 20007. No specific deed located in the City Register, but the Lot is listed under The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York.

***Note:** The combined McDonalds and adjacent sites, across the street from the new Columbia campus site, are at high risk of overdevelopment should Columbia decide to proceed



(23.) Duane Reade
 -- 568 W. 125th
 Street
Amalgamated Bank
 -- 564 W. 125th Street
Wine Shop -- 566 W.
 125th Street
 (VACANT)
Lincoln Fried
Chicken -- 576 W.
 125th Street
Subway Shop -- 578
 W. 125th Street
 Block 1980
 Lot 75
 Note: The SW corner
 of 125th Street is
 a one-story

commercial structure with a Duane Reade on Broadway, and several small retail outlets, including a Subway and a Wine Shop, and Amalgamated Bank on 125th Street around the corner. There is also a Bank of America forming the corner slot. Although some of these locations have different addresses, they all seem to fall into a single Block and Lot, and under the same ownership.

Most recent recorded deed: 10/26/2012 -- Jay & Mark Irgang at 125th/Broadway LLC Irgang Equities, 121 Tweed Blvd., Nyack, NY 10960 212 758 0588, own many NY properties.

The 125th Street corner is at high risk of overdevelopment, given the right offer, and perhaps contingent on the retail leases (one shop is already vacant) including Duane Reade (Walgreen), a national chain.

Note: An adjacent **CTown Supermarket** at 560 W. 125th Street, Block 1980, Lot 1, is not part of the same ownership or deed as the group of stores. CTown is deeded 4/25/2012 to New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and United States Department of HUD.