
NEW YORK POST

Prewar mod

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BUILDING in Carnegie Hill is tough. The Upper East Side historic district, a haven for families, contains some of the city's prettiest prewar buildings, and there have been fights over the look and size of new projects.

So the developers of 21 E. 96th St., just one building away from the historic district, decided that the solution was to put prewar layouts into a modern building. The condo, which will open in a year, is only 11 stories tall. However, all the units top 3,000 square feet, with the living and sleeping areas clearly separated — which is traditional for prewars.

The homes are pricey — four-bedroom, four-bathroom apartments are selling in the range of \$4 million — but they have 421a tax abatements, keeping monthly taxes under \$1,000. And there are luxury details like French oak hardwood floors and black and white Italian marble.

There are also modern systems, which would cause the average prewar to blow a gasket — like a multiple-zone heating/cooling system and an electronic security system that the builders insist is state of the art.

The building's mixture of past and present carries over into its exterior. The large windows reveal its modern origins, but the planned limestone-and-brick neoclassical facade will fit in with the neighborhood's traditional look. As Corcoran Group broker Sophie de Sanctis says, "At a glance it looks like a large prewar building, but it has a lot of contemporary elements."

Five of the nine units (the bottom floor will be commercial space) are already sold.

Partly, that's the market's hunger for family-sized pads. As developer Jamison Weiner describes it: "We really envision this as a family building ... You have so many schools in the area, the park is right there, one of New York's best playgrounds is right down the street." Will Carnegie Hill absorb the new kids on the block? In recent years, citizens' groups in the area have protested several new developments (Woody Allen even joined in to oppose an addition at Madison and 91st Street), claiming that they were out of character for the neighborhood.

Next-door-neighbor-to-be Jill Allison, a resident of 17 E. 96th St., has adopted an attitude of quiet resignation as far as the new building goes.

"I remember when they put up that building on 72nd and Riverside," she says. "Everyone was really upset; there was a lot of litigation. But you know what? The building went up anyway."

