



UPDATE: Morningside Heights Community Rezoning Plan

Warning! -- Entire 2875 Broadway (Southwest corner of 112th Street) now stands empty and may be open for development

Warning! -- Columbia is planning a new structure of unknown height and purpose for 115th Street

Our plan is moving ahead, and will limit building heights and promote affordable housing -- but we have to act fast!



Pinkberry, the last of the small storefronts occupying the now empty three-story 2875 Broadway, departed on September 29, after its lease was reportedly not renewed by the building owner, Longfellow Properties.

At one time, 2875 at 112th Street was home to the Columbia Spectator, a Chase Bank (and in bygone days, the renowned Moon Palace restaurant), and most recently, Party & More, Hex & Co., and the sales showroom for the Vandewater apartment building located at 122nd Street, adjacent to the

Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). You may recall that JTS sold land and air rights enabling the developer, Savanna, to construct the 34-story all-luxury Vandewater condo tower.

Could another luxury tower rise on 112th Street, similar to the Vandewater, or to the 40-story luxury tower now rising at 100 Claremont Avenue, built on the Union Theological Seminary campus? Seems like a possibility.

At the same time, Columbia has notified neighbors that “*an exploratory survey is being completed at a parking lot on West 115th Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Morningside Drive.*” This is the site where three of the Heights oldest townhouses once stood, demolished by Columbia in 2010.

With the likely purchase of “air rights” from the Church of Notre Dame, we estimate that Columbia could develop a mid-block, non-contextual tower as high as 30 stories on 115th Street, without the inclusion of any affordable housing.

If we do nothing, all we will get are luxury buildings without any affordable units. But there is a reasonable alternative that you may already know about.

[The Morningside Heights Planning Study](#), co-sponsored by [MHCC](#), Council Member Mark Levine, Borough President Gale Brewer, Community Board 9, and Speaker Corey Johnson, is complete, but still needs a required Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS), and approval through ULURP, before coming to a City Council vote.

Due to the Council’s emergency budget re-allocations during the COVID crisis, our EAS consultant procurement process was delayed. **The good news is that funding is now restored, and we are proceeding again as planned!**

As you can guess, the sooner City Council enacts the zoning changes, the better we, as a community, can limit the building height of any new development, and ensure a significant inclusion of affordable units. We must, as a community, continue to support our elected officials, and accelerate the zoning plan approval process as quickly as possible.

Back in September 2016, MHCC produced what is familiarly known as a “[Soft Site](#)” report, documenting over 20 sites vulnerable to luxury overdevelopment. Since then, a number of sites have been demolished, including the McDonalds corner at 125th Street to make way for Columbia’s emerging 34-story tower, and a 1907 Harvard brick building at 415 W 120th Street replaced by Monarch Heights, an 80 unit non-contextual, mid-block 14-story building offering market-rate shared rentals primarily for students. **MHCC estimates that of the 800 new units near completion or slated for development in our community, none will be affordable.**

The “Soft Site” report also included a warning about overdevelopment at 2875 Broadway and at the 115th Street Columbia parking lot. (A recent property data check shows no change of ownership.) Here is what the “Soft Site” report stated about these properties in 2016 (2875 site photo is updated).

“(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. “



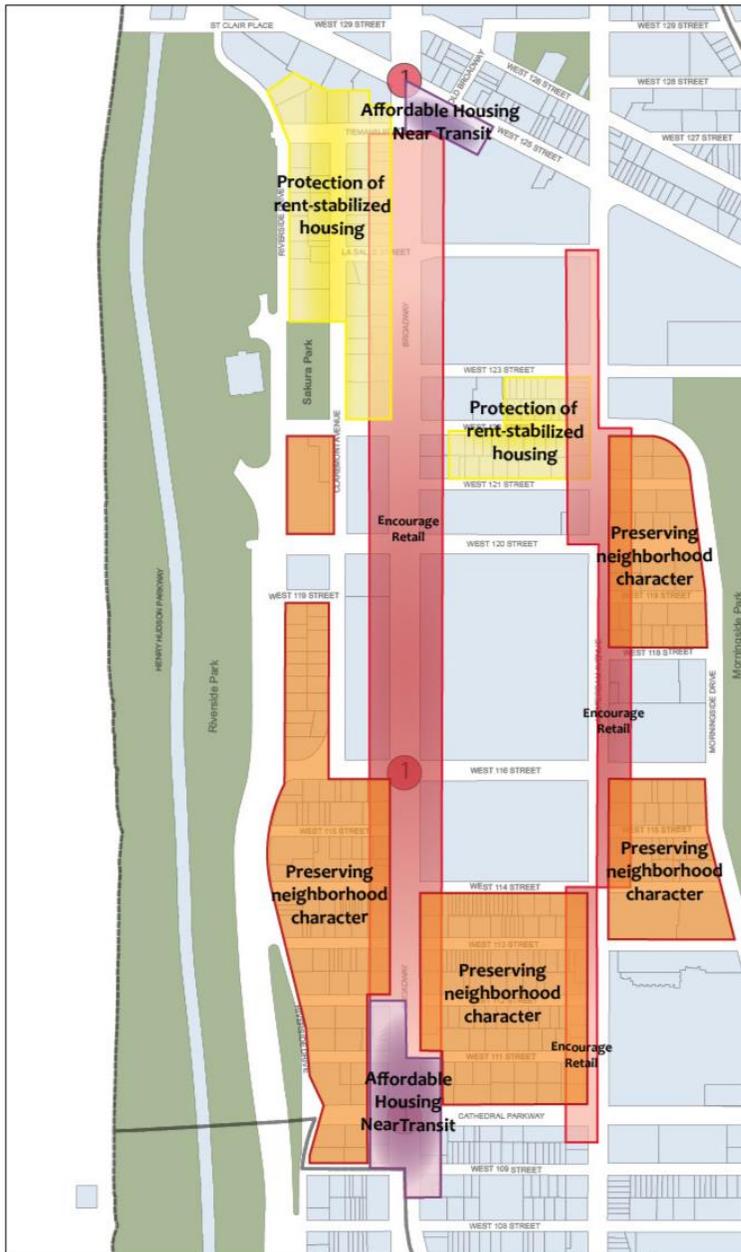
**“(16.) Columbia University Parking Lot and St. Luke’s Building – West 115th Street through to West 114th including 411 W. 114th Street
Block 1867
Lot 9**

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. "



How will rezoning Morningside Heights limit building heights and promote affordable housing? The Morningside Heights Planning Study details the benefits of increasing density at specific potential development sites along Broadway, but imposes height caps. At the same time, with increased density comes mandatory inclusion of affordable units. Under the proposed rezoning, a developer could no longer be able to combine adjacent lots and the purchase of “air rights” to greatly exceed zoning regulations to build 40-story luxury towers.

Additionally, The Morningside Heights Planning Study also places low height caps on side-street buildings with predominantly rent-stabilized units, particularly in the northern areas, to deter speculative luxury high-rise development. It also establishes commercial zoning changes to promote new, small business activity in neighborhood areas which have been described by some residents as “dead zones.”

The Morningside Heights Planning Study would “upzone” certain sites, but still significantly limit the height of any new development, while ensuring the inclusion of potentially 25%-30% affordable units.

When the City Council adopts the Morningside Heights plan, the monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment for a family of four will likely range from \$630 to around

\$2600, depending on annual household income. By comparison, condo prices at the Vandewater are advertised

to start at a little under \$1 Million, and rise to \$6 Million. And two-bedroom monthly rentals at 30 Morningside Drive, the re-purposed compound sold by St. Luke's Hospital to a developer for over \$100 Million in 2016, range from \$7,500 to nearly \$9,000.

So time is of the essence. While many of our neighbors have already been displaced by rising rents, other sites in our community are vulnerable to out-of-scale luxury development, while offering no affordable units.

The Morningside Heights Community Coalition vision is to promote affordable housing, limit luxury over-development, and preserve the character and quality of life in our community. Like the Vandewater, and 100 Claremont Avenue in the northern section of Morningside Heights, these potential out-of-scale luxury developments at 2875 Broadway and 115th Street between Amsterdam and Morningside Drive are currently threatening our community's well-being.