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Landmarks Panel May End East Side Clash

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The city's Landmarks Preservation Commission may end a months-long clash that has pitted residents and preservationists against a developer seeking to erect a 14-story apartment tower in the Upper East Side Historic District

At a meeting today, the commission is scheduled to vote on Friedland Properties' plan to tear down a two-story structure that currently houses a number of businesses, including a hair salon and the Parisian bistro La Goulue, at Madison Avenue near 72nd Street, to make room for luxury condominiums.

The proposal has outraged local resident groups, which say its height and density would dilute Madison Avenue's unique character. Last month, dozens of residents and preservationists turned out at a public hearing to testify against the plan.

According to the executive director of Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, Seri Worden, the proposal to tear down the structure is a nonstarter.

"Tearing down what is a contributing building in a historic district is inappropriate and sets a terrible precedent for other historic districts," she said.

The building was constructed in 1885 by the synagogue of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, which sold it in 1910. It then went through several makeovers before assuming its present two-story, neo-Georgian form in 1938.

Ms. Worden said she expects a strong turnout at today's meeting, at which the 11-member landmarks commission will likely discuss the proposal and the public comments. The panel can then vote to reject the proposal, propose modifications, or approve it outright.

"We think the size and the design is simply at odds with the location. There is nothing really like this building in the area," Ms. Worden said. The developer and the architect for the project, Page Ayres Cowley, declined to comment.