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Vote on Landmark Status Set for Manhattan House

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The Manhattan House, rising from East 66th Street, set the standard for post World War II apartments, preservation advocates say.

A sprawling white-brick Upper East Side apartment building, which was once inhabited by [Grace Kelly](#) and [Benny Goodman](#) and inspired other uptown modernist buildings, may become a landmark. The [Landmarks Preservation Commission](#) is set to vote tomorrow on whether to pursue landmark designation for [Manhattan House](#), at 200 East 66 Street, whose ample light and ventilation influenced a generation of postwar apartment buildings.

Designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the gleaming building, which has approximately 583 apartments, received an award from the New York Chapter of the [American Institute of Architects](#) in 1952, a year after its

completion. Its glass-walled lobbies are set below a spare frame with Bauhaus-style balconies. A sloping driveway traverses the front of the H-shaped apartment building, which stretches between Second and Third avenues and is bounded by 65th and 66th streets.

The president of Docomomo [US](#), an advocacy group for documenting and conserving buildings of the modern movement nationally, Theodore Prudon, said Manhattan House began to set the standard for apartment house designs following World War II. The co-chair of the Modern Architecture Working Group, an ad hoc committee of preservationists, John Jurayj, said this building has always been known, virtually from the time it was built, as architecturally important.

Another Skidmore, Owings & [Merrill Building](#) under consideration for landmark status is the [Guardian Life Insurance Company](#) Annex at 105 East 17 St (1959-63).

"One of our top priorities is to preserve the city's modern architecture, which is why we are pursuing Manhattan House and Guardian Life with a great deal of determination," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "Both of these buildings are important examples of architecture that is finally getting its due." The owners of Manhattan House, N. Richard Kalikow and Jeremiah O'Connor Jr., were unable to be reached by press time. The building has been undergoing conversion to condominiums.

The decision to hold a hearing on Manhattan House has the support of two local council members in the area. Council Member Daniel Garodnick said, "As the City's first white-brick apartment building and one of the finest examples of the International Modern Style, Manhattan House is a strong candidate for landmark designation." [Council Member Jessica Lappin](#) agreed the building was worthy of consideration.

The Landmarks Commission has designated other modernist buildings such as the Summit Hotel at 569 Lexington Ave. If the two Skidmore, Owings & Merrill buildings become landmarked, they will join other noteworthy buildings from that firm, such as the [Pepsi-Cola](#) Building at 500 Park Ave., the Manufacturer's Trust Company Building at 510 Fifth Ave., and Lever House at 390 Park Ave.

The director of Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, [Seri Worden](#), acknowledged that the landmark process can be a tough sell for some who, for example, might have grown up with the building and do not see why modern buildings were historically important. But she said this building was both important and especially well designed. Its large shiny white presence, she said, was quite a contrast to the dark brick tenements once seen along the elevated train line.