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WHITE-BRICK HIGH RISES



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID TOMONO

No, these are not two shots of the same building but a pair of the mix-and-match white-brick towers—200 E. 66th and 150 E. 69th—that can be found chiefly on the Upper East Side.

To apartment builders in the '50s, white glazed brick meant ultramodern. But times have changed, and today the white behemoths that sprang up mainly on the Inner East Side after the demise of the

"They do not make the heart sing," says Clark Halstead of the Halstead Property Company. Yet for just that reason, he adds, "they tend to be bargains."

"They offer more space for the dollar than the prewar or [new] modern build-

SCOREBOARD

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ings," agrees Barbara Corcoran, president of the Corcoran Group. "And they offer more light because they have more windows."

The granddaddy of all these anonymous buildings is the 1950 Manhattan House at 200 E. 66th Street, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Mayer & Whittlesey and built by the New York Life Insurance Co. Unlike most of its offspring, Manhattan House is still a rental building.

Most of the white-brick apartment buildings were quickly erected to beat zoning changes established in 1961, which reduced the allowable bulk on the Upper East Side. Typically they have 24-hour



The high rise that spawned a generation of imitators: Manhattan House, at 200 E. 66th St.

doormen, basement garages, and large, windowed lobbies (often still outfitted for the early '60s, with Bauhaus-type sofas and speckled floors). Interior courtyards and circular driveways are fairly common. The apartments tend to have spacious rooms and ample closet space, and many of the larger ones have balconies. Most of the buildings also offer long, skinny wrap terraces on the upper three to five floors. Although some of the buildings have 3BR apartments, most tend to house smaller units.

CO-OPS: Corcoran estimates that 80 percent of the white-bricks are now co-ops, converted mostly in the late '70s and early '80s. A comparison of prewar and postwar 2BRs in the 70s east of Third Avenue shows that blandness means bargains. With both types of apartments averaging around 1,100 square feet, the average prewar price listed by the Corcoran Group was \$425,000, versus \$388,000 for post-

war units. "Most were built as rental buildings," with few of the amenities found in today's new buildings, says Halstead. "If you get one in original condition, you will have to do a lot of work to bring it up to today's standards."

Studios start at around \$90,000 and rise to \$150,000 and up, depending on size and location. 1BRs start at around \$155,000 and average in the low \$200,000s. 2BRs range from \$240,000 to the \$400,000s, and 3BRs reach into the \$800,000s and above. Upper-floor terraced apartments in the more prestigious buildings can cost well over \$1 million.

Maintenances in these postwar buildings average \$1 per square foot, says Bill

Kunkel, director of sales at 301 E. 66th St. That building's sponsor, Imperial Properties, has refurbished the building's lobby and halls as well as the kitchens and bathrooms and offers outside buyers the option of upgrading their units and financing the cost along with their purchase price.

RENTALS: Many rentals in this category are co-op sublets, and many are offered furnished. Prices vary widely. One broker specializing in rentals estimates that studios in white-brick buildings tend to range from \$1,000 to \$1,400 a month and 1BRs from \$1,200 to \$2,400. 2BRs range from around \$1,800 to as much as \$3,500 and 3BRs from \$2,500 to \$3,500.

RECENT SALES:

250 E. 65th St.
2BR, 1,350-square-foot condo
Asking price: \$525,000
Selling price: \$495,000
Time on market: 4 months

Source: Second Avenue Realty

33 Greenwich Ave.
1BR, 800-square-foot co-op
Asking price: \$185,000
Selling price: \$175,000
Time on market: 5 months

Source: Greenwich Realty

CONDOS: Few of the white-brick '60s buildings are condominiums, since most were converted before the recent swing toward condo conversion. One exception is 250 E. 65th St., where all but one of the units offered to outside buyers have been sold. A 2BR remains on the market, priced at \$460,000 with monthly common charges of \$589 and taxes of \$292. According to Benjamin Barshay, a sales agent with Second Avenue Realty, the building's large apartment sizes are typical of many of the postwar white-brick buildings, with 1BRs averaging 1,000 square feet, 2BRs 1,400 square feet, and 3BRs 1,700 square feet.

Jennifer Stern