



By BARBARA PRESLEY NOBLE

LIKE many parts of Manhattan, the area known as Yorkville finds that its distinctiveness as a neighborhood is fading.

"When you said 'Yorkville' it used to mean something," said Assemblyman Alexander B. Gramis, a Democrat-Liberal who represents the neighborhood. "But now it's just a physical place; the name doesn't mean much anymore."

But perhaps because gentrification started in Yorkville decades ago, before there was even a word for the concept, the neighborhood seems to have developed resilience. In the face of the growth and development that have blurred the line between Yorkville and its glittery neighbor to the south of 78th Street, the Upper East Side, Yorkville seems determined to redefine itself.

It is an area unit, for a while now, the sense of community," said David Stern, director of the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association, a social agency that serves the area. "One of the negative consequences of gentrification was that it completely tore the social fabric."

But he thinks the fabric is well on the mend, and for that he gives much credit to the young urban professionals who, having settled in droves in Yorkville's new high-rises, plugged into the neighborhood's civic organizations.

They came to an area overflowing with new living space. A dozen new buildings with about 2,300 units have opened in the last several years, and Yale Robbins, the real estate research and publishing company, says that at least 10 with more than 1,200 apartments are either on the way or proposed. Developers have marched the traditional northern border from 86th Street to 88th Street by convincing potential residents that the extra 10 blocks is the upper Upper East Side.

Residents can quickly enumerate Yorkville's virtues: the mix of people, the convenience of having "everything at your fingertips" and, especially, the pockets of Old World culture that survive from the time decades ago when Yorkville was a lively blue-collar community dominated by residents of German background.

The German presence in Yorkville dates to the late 18th century, when German immigrants settled near what is now 86th Street. In the early 19th century, wealthy New York families, including several of German descent, established country estates in the area; later in the century, the estates yielded to urbanization and were gridded into city blocks. German families then moved uptown from the Lower East Side, and in the peak years of European immigration, Yorkville became the destination for waves of immigrants, including central Europeans and Irish as well as the Germans.

Many ended up working in the area's breweries and frequenting the cafes, beer



halls and social clubs along 86th Street. Before World War II, Yorkville was home to several pro-Nazi groups, including the national headquarters of Fritz Kuhn's German American Bund.

One of Yorkville's more famous residents, the late actor James Cagney, was honored last Tuesday when Mayor Edward I. Koch signed a bill designating East 91st Street between Second and Third Avenues as James Cagney Place.

YORKVILLE'S decline as a distinct enclave began with postwar real estate development on the East Side and was speeded greatly by the 1956 raising of the Third Avenue el, which removed a demarcation point between Yorkville and the silk stocking district to the west. The latest wave of development has inspired resistance by community advocates to what they describe as "canyonization" of the area's avenues with high-rises out of proportion to the neighborhood's scale.

"I was standing at the corner of 88th and Third," said Carolyn Greenberg, who lives on 88th Street. "The road had said it was sunny. I couldn't tell."

Ms. Greenberg, who is the new director of Reason (Reason: Eastside Arterials/ Save Our Neighborhood), advocates a "start and fat, not tall and skinny" approach to new buildings. Residents have been successful in getting midblocks or east-west streets downzoned, to maintain their residential character. The City Planning Commission is rezoning the 8th Street commercial area to require contextual development. The impact of reducing vacant lots and gas stations with multi-unit residences is evident in congestion on public transportation, and in the traffic jams on the avenues.

"Suddenly you have all these new buildings where people never existed before," said Tony Mureni, an aide to Assemblyman Gramis. "Nobody really knows how many people live here anymore."

The count is made more difficult because in the new buildings, many young people share at Normandie Court, where the campus-like atmosphere seems designed to attract students. The complex, to adult life, students start at \$1,150 and one-bedroom at about \$1,295. Also widely available, forwarpds of \$1,390 monthly, are subdivided apartments in walk-up tenement flats once inhabited by local workers and their families.

Yorkville is an exception to the overall stagnant Manhattan co-op and condominium market, said Greg Young, the vice president for residential sales at J.I. Sopher, the real estate company. "There's a leon the market right now in Yorkville, with some good buys," he said.

Postwar on-bedroom co-ops west of

Yorkville

Small park tucked amid the high-rises on Second Avenue near 95th Street.

Below Sun bathers in Carl Schurz Park overlooking the East River.



man cuisine. For Hungarian food, there is Moca on Second Avenue between 82d and 84th Streets. It says only one thing appealing about the neighborhood that the health food store on 86th Street is boarded up, while the Marzigan Store next door seems to be thriving.

On East 82d Street, between Second and Third Avenues, are other reminders: the Püski-Corvin Magyar Könyvesház, a Hungarian book and record store. Next door, is the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, where spiritual descendants of Sigmund Freud tend to evis and id.

Religious institutions have played a major role in preserving Yorkville's cultures and in responding to need. Down the block from the Hungarian bookstore, on East 83d, is the Hungarian Reform Church, offering services in Hungarian.

Many churches and synagogues have food or shelter programs for Yorkville's estimated 1,400 homeless. The quiet garden and French Gothic-style architecture of the Episcopalian Church of the Holy Trinity, on 88th Street between First and Second Avenues, offers an unexpected refuge from urban life.

Yorkville is home to some of New York's elite private schools, including Chapin and Brearley, and at certain times of the day the streets are clogged with youngsters wearing pre-school plaids.

Parents who cannot afford a prep school or do not choose to send their children to one are vined to it. Except for a Catholic elementary school or Public Schools 188, 158, 151 or 150.

In P.S. 190, on 82d Street, between First and Second Avenues, is the Lab School for Gifted Education, an innovative seventh- and eighth-grade program. The Lab School has a computer link with Moscow school that allows students to do joint science, history and social studies projects.

Yorkville children who stay in the public schools traditionally go to Robert Wagner, the East Side's only junior high school, and on to one of the city's academic or specialized high schools.

Gazetteer
Population: 68,200 (1985 estimate).
Median 1-bedroom co-op price: \$350,000.
Median 1-bedroom condominium price: \$250,000.
Median 1-bedroom rental: \$1,150.
Transportation: Nos. 4, 5 and 6 subways; buses on 78th, 86th and 95th Streets and York, First, Second and Third Avenues.
Neighborhood: Yorkville is home to Dryfoos, Democrat-Liberal.
First Branch: The Yorkville branch of the New York Public Library was the first of 39 branch libraries constructed in 1902 with money donated by Andrew Carnegie. The original facade survives, but the interior was modernized during a renovation three years ago and now, according to one neighborhood architectural critic, the Yorkville branch is "Manhattan's first post-modernist library."

Summer

Question: A tenant has been letting his apartment to a subtenant three months every summer for the last three years. This time he is in his house in the country. We do not want to grant him a sublet next summer. We have the right to re-sublet? ... I. S. Manhattan

Answer: Probably not. Code, a rent-stabilized apartment for up to two years. While as the landlord you may not unreasonably withhold permission, your tenant has to meet requirements, too. For it to be legal, it is his plan to use the apartment as his home, as well as his business of the purpose of the sublet agreement.

Medical Offices

Question: I have been a rent-stabilized apartment for the last 12 years. I have been designated for medical use. I am on the floor to the seventh floor in one building. I have a suite and I am the same thing to units up to the floor in my building. As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in nonresidential traffic, with doctors waiting in and out and elevators broken down constantly from all this use. Is it legal for the landlord to do this? If not, what can the tenants do about it? ... N. C., Manhattan

Answer: Your landlord's right to convert a residential building into medical offices is in the type of medical use. If the buildings are in a commercial zone, the medical offices are permitted. If the zone is residential, medical offices are allowed on the first floor and second floor; there is direct access to the street. Value Tirykian, a spokesman for the Department of Buildings, said there was a caveat to the prohibition: the buildings in a residential zone, the medical might be allowed if it is an outpatient center by a state-incorporated hospital to serve the community or a government-operated health center.

Whatever the case, the landlord would be required to file plans for conversion of the space from residential to medical with the Department of Buildings. Y check the legality of the medical use by contact Department of Buildings or the city's Department Planning.

Work/Living Space

Question: I am a one-man executive search company. I am working full time out of my rent-stabilized apartment. I am on the telephone all day. I am quiet but my landlord complains that my apartment is too hot to live in. Do I have the right to be out of my apartment on a hot vulnerable to eviction? ... Manhattan

Answer: It would not be a violation of the Stabilization Act for you to maintain an office apartment as long as it also serves as your residence. Office use is permitted in residences where the "home occupation" clause of the city's Building Code.

Any professional space must be limited to 25 sq ft of the total area of the apartment or 500 square feet, whichever is less. It would be against the rental laws, however, if you were to move out and use apartment only as an office.

Address questions to Real Estate Q & A, The New York Times, 29 West 42d Street, New York, N.Y. Answers can be given only through the column. I include names, addresses and daytime telephone numbers.