

Robb Report



Luxury

Property

Guide

**Montana Is
Calling**

**Unexpected Cities
to Invest In**

**New York's
Classic Revival**

Cult



Left: Inspired by the nearly century-old Rockefeller Center, the 45-story Rose Hill residential tower is a stately addition to the NoMad neighborhood.
Right: Situated on Billionaires' Row, 220 Central Park South has a tasteful Alabama-limestone facade and rows of stacked windows.



Classics

It seems the age of glass and steel is taking a refined step back. In a city known for pushing boundaries in architecture and design, New York's latest crop of residential high-rises is drawing inspiration from a more timeless palette—think limestone, loggias, and intricate facades straight out of a Fitzgerald novel. If you thought classical architecture in the city was only for prewar gems, think again. Today, developers and designers are channeling a bygone era, but with a contemporary twist, offering residences that feel elegant, timeless, and distinctly New York.

A pioneer of developments that reference historic styles, Robert A. M. Stern Architects (RAMSA) has been working for decades to inject the Manhattan skyline with an architectural character hearkening

In New York City's recent batch of residential towers, buyers find design details and floorplans plucked from the past. By Lauren Gallow

LEFT: DAVID SUNDBERG; RIGHT: FRANCIS DZIKOWSKI/OTTO

back to earlier eras. “One of the reasons we love to design traditional buildings is there’s a narrative and a romance to them,” says Paul Whalen, partner at RAMSA, who along with fellow firm partner Michael Jones, worked on 15 Central Park West and 220 Central Park South—two of the most successful recent examples of new classical-leaning residential towers. In both developments, the designers used masonry facades, set-back terraces, and ornamental metalwork to convey a stately yet modern expression. “15 Central Park West surprised everyone. We had no idea it was going to be so successful,” says Jones, referring to the building’s record-setting sales, including the \$45 million penthouse, which, at the time was the city’s most expensive apartment.

Today, RAMSA, along with a host of other firms, is partnering with developers to continue this more time-honored tack. Instead of anonymous steel-and-glass boxes that would be as comfortable in New York as they would in Singapore, Dubai, or Sydney, these developers are hedging their bets on more-contextual buildings that innovate on specific historic elements of New York’s storied architectural past.

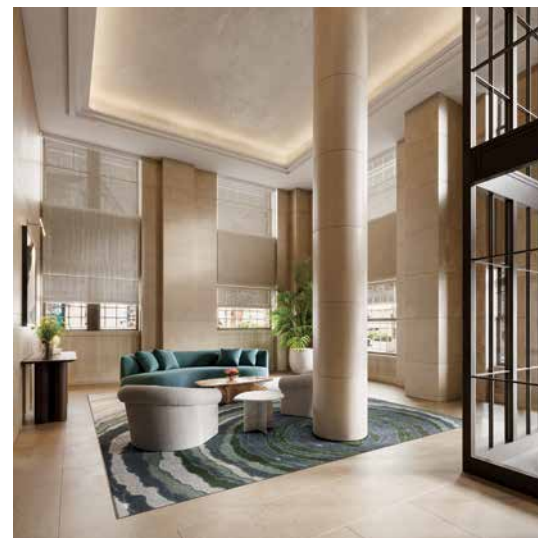
“Those tall glass buildings are like shrink-wrapped sculptural objects,” says Gregg Pasquarelli, founding

principal of SHoP Architects. “To me, there’s no scale in those buildings. They become abstract objects.” In opposition, Pasquarelli has been leading the firm’s efforts on projects where materiality and human-scale details drive the design. Often, this involves drawing upon elements from the past.

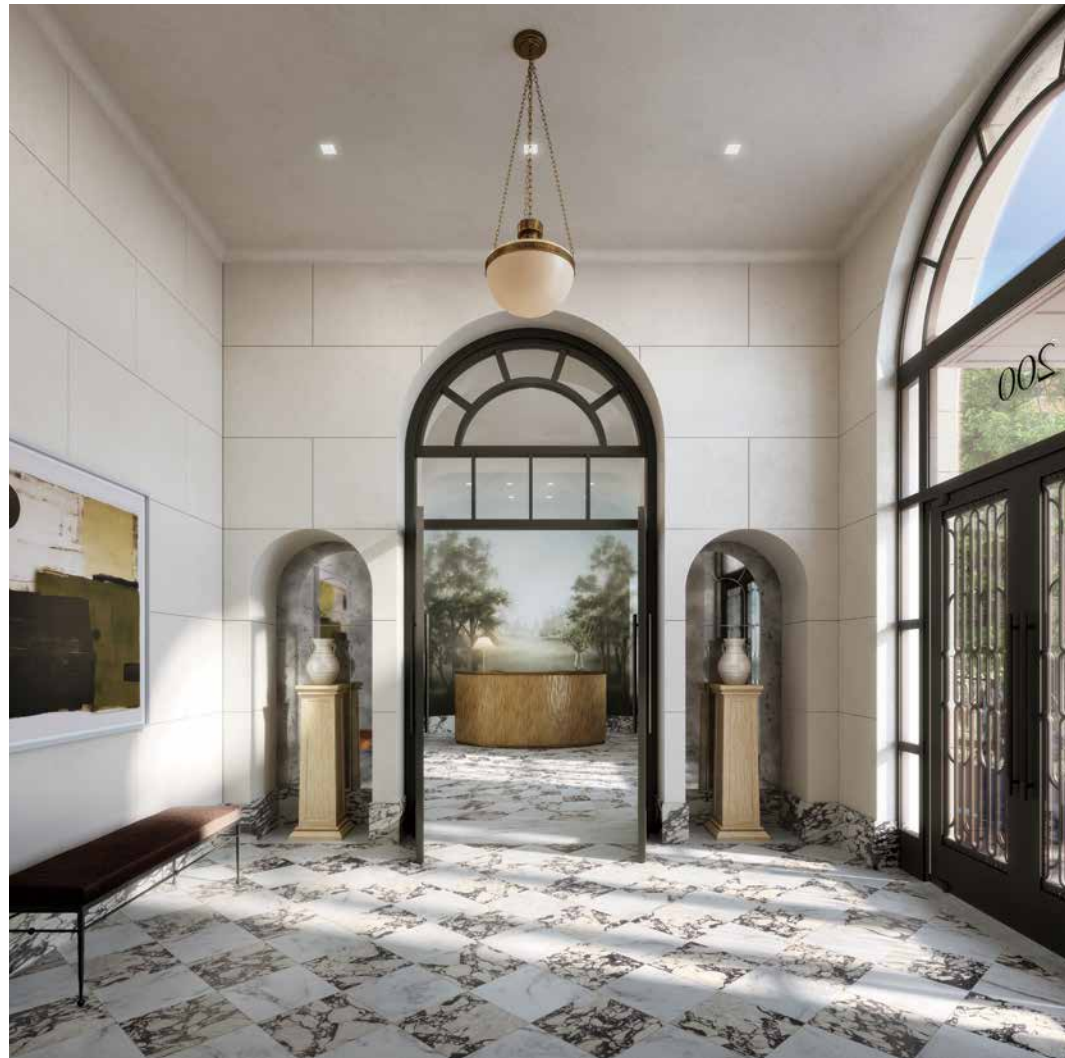
One such recent development is 111 W. 57th, a Midtown tower that nods to the Art Deco details in the landmark 1920s Steinway & Sons building at its base. “For us, it’s not necessarily about being traditional, it’s about rediscovering materials and using today’s technology to put them forward in a contemporary way,” says Pasquarelli. Rising up to 1,428 feet, the building is one of the tallest in New York, an engineering feat made possible only by today’s construction technologies. The profile of the building feels decidedly contemporary, but a closer look reveals a facade of intricately arranged terra-cotta panels, a material common to early-20th-century structures. The result is a wavelike moiré pattern that reads best at an intimate scale and feels modern but not trendy.

It’s not just exteriors that are nodding to the past. Many new towers are drawing on heritage influences for plans and interior details. “Coming out of Covid, the challenge has been creating floorplans that

Top: An adaptive-reuse project by Thomas Juul-Hansen, the 720 West End Building sits in the heart of the Upper West Side. *Bottom:* The classically inspired Claremont Hall is on the Union Theological Seminary campus; Robert A. M. Stern Architects preserved the building’s original facade.



Clockwise from right: Arched doorways and checkerboard marble bring vintage refinement to the lobby of the 200 E. 75th residential tower; at 220 Central Park South, Stern interpreted pre-war design with a contemporary sensibility; restored by CetraReddy, Walker Tower combines historic restoration with modern amenities.



TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM: FRANCIS DZIKOWSKI/OTTO

are open but allow you to close off spaces for more-segmented rooms,” says Elizabeth Graziolo, founder and principal of Yellow House Architects, who is designing the interiors for the classically inspired 200 E. 75th tower with architects Beyer Blinder Belle. “The lobby is this beautifully vaulted room, which is a traditional shape but with minimal moldings, so it feels contemporary. The classical design language teaches you scale and proportion and how to create a space that feels good.”

Indeed, many towers are mixing old with new for something that feels uniquely of the moment and distinctly in context with New York. “For the interiors of our 200 Amsterdam project, we referred back to pre-war apartments and the graciousness of their layouts,” says Ximena Rodriguez, director of interior design at CetraRuddy, a firm that has designed both interiors and architecture for projects including the Rockefeller Center-inspired Rose Hill tower and the nearly complete 200 East 20th, which nods subtly to its beaux-arts Gramercy Park neighbors. At 200 Amsterdam on the Upper West Side, grand foyers in the homes nod to the city’s beloved early-20th-century buildings, and subtle design details like metal inlays in stone floors and mosaic tile in powder rooms pop against current design elements like Carrara-marble kitchens and floor-to-ceiling corner windows. “They’re classic details but done very modern, so they don’t feel traditional,” says Rodriguez.

For buyers, the draw is often about connecting to the grand story of the city. “People feel like they’re buying a piece of history,” says Tara King-Brown, associate broker at the Corcoran Group. “Especially with conversion buildings like 720 West End Avenue that offer the best of both worlds.” Projects like that one—a 100-year-old Emery Roth–designed building that was formerly a hotel and that real-estate marketing and sales firm Corcoran Sunshine introduced to the market with Thomas Juul-Hansen and BP Architects as luxury condominiums—strike a chord with those who want authentic heritage elements but with updated creature comforts like central heating and cooling. In the case of 720 West End, amenities are a bonus, including a residents-only bar and billiards lounge and a remote workspace with a curated reading selection.

“It’s allowing people to buy in to a piece of an original historic building, but reinvent how they would live there,” says Elisa Orlanski Ours, chief planning and design officer at Corcoran Sunshine. Ours regularly works with developers on conversion and new residential projects and notes that the appetite for these character-forward buildings in New York only continues to grow. “A traditional-style building is not just a home; it’s something that has a connection to the city and its rich architectural history,” she says. “There’s a sense of permanence.” ●