



Preservationists have launched a petition to protect The Kaskel & Kaskel Building, a 115-year-old Beaux Arts style structure at Fifth Avenue and 32nd Street. (Credit: amNewYork/Sarina Trangle)



## REAL ESTATE

# NOMAD residents launch petition to save Fifth Avenue Beaux Arts-style building

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Residents of one Manhattan neighborhood, tired of watching shiny towers replace stately structures, are mounting a petition campaign to get the area landmarked.

The 29th Street Neighborhood Association started an online petition last week to “Stop the demolition of 316 Fifth Avenue and the NOMAD District,” referring to the area north of Madison Square and a last-ditch effort to save one building within it.

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COMMENTS

“The fabric of the area is disappearing,” said Mario Messina, founder of the association who has lived on Park Avenue and 29th Street for more than 35 years. “What makes New York famous is the architecture, the culture.”

The petition has gathered more than 9,000 signatures. Nearly 500 of them came from New York City residents, according to the Care2 website hosting the petition.

The group is focused on shielding The Kaskel & Kaskel Building, at 316 Fifth Ave., from the wrecking ball. The 115-year-old Beaux Arts style structure could be replaced with a 40-story mixed-use building, according to plans filed by developers with the city.

The petition is addressed to the head of the city Landmarks Preservation Commission, Mayor Bill de Blasio and other city officials. In it, the neighborhood association urges the city Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate the building.

Preservationist George Calderaro, a board member of the association, called the building “irreplaceable.”

“It is the only structure of this kind on this stretch of Fifth Avenue between 23rd Street and 34th Street,” he said. “Blocks are being swept away.”

In a statement, the Landmarks Preservation Commission said it is currently reviewing 316 Fifth Ave.

The developer, Cottonwood Management LLC, applied for a demolition permit from the city Buildings Department in July, but has yet to receive approval. They previously received a construction permit to demolish some nonstructural, interior walls.

Meanwhile, Cottonwood Management’s application for a 40-story building was denied on July 20 because the Building Department said it was incomplete.

In a statement, Cottonwood declined to comment other than to say it had submitted public project filings to the city.

The neighborhood group said it has been seeking to prevent situations like this by asking the city to expand the existing Madison Square North Historic District to blocks that it contends are vulnerable to development.

Specifically, the group is seeking protection for the area from 24th to 33rd streets between First and Eighth avenues – also known as Kips Bay and Midtown South.

“During these years of [Landmarks Preservation Commission] inaction, we have watched building after building succumb to the wrecking ball to be replaced by over-scale, bland luxury towers and silver hotels used now as shelters for homeless people,” the group noted in its petition.