

Architecture review: At new East 79th Street tower, a stone-and-glass pas de deux

By [James Gardner](#) | August 24, 2012 03:30PM

As long as developers are building “as of right,” as long as they do not need to win some variance, they seem increasingly apt to hold their cards close to their vest and not to publish any renderings of how their project will look upon completion. And so it is with 200 East 79th Street (not to mention 127 East 79th Street, just up the block.) For almost a year now, something has been rising on the site, but there was no way of assessing it, other than to say that it would result in a somewhat boxy structure.

Now, however, the [200 East 79th Street](#) project — brought to us by The Wilf family’s Skyline Developers — is sufficiently far along, and a 3D rendering of sorts has appeared on the building’s scaffolding, to give a far better sense of what, for the next century or so, will occupy this important corner of the Upper East Side at the intersection of 79th Street and Third Avenue.

It is the work — according to all we can glean — of Cetra/Ruddy, the designers behind the Walker Tower conversion and the unfairly maligned One Madison Park. Whereas that project was ultra-modern, this newer building is somewhat more traditional. The 18-story building is clad in pale, pre-cast stone that endows it with a subtly classical feel that is enhanced by certain grooved details in the cladding, as well as sills at the base of each window that have a pre-war feel.

These windows dominate the façade, adding interest and variety to it in such a way that it avoids the modular tedium that sometimes besets more modernist idioms. Along the sides of the building diminutive square windows can be seen, as well as at the corner of 79th Street. In between, however, most of the building’s surface is dominated by double-height windows that extend two floors (and presumably two apartments). Starting at the 15th floor, the building undergoes a stepped setback that resembles the configuration used at [200 West 72nd Street](#) at Broadway, another building that commands an important corner of the city. But its use is far subtler here and is not spoiled by a sense of cost-cutting construction that marks the Upper West Side building.

In its elegant simplicity, its imaginative window-work and its sensitive details, [200 East 79th Street](#), even in its state of partial completion, looks to be a welcome enhancement of the Upper East Side.