

# Mpls St Paul

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December 8, 2022

## **The Perks of Park Avenue**

Celebrating 75 years as one of Minneapolis's few co-ops, the historic building at 26th Street and Park Avenue near downtown remains a beacon for the curious and the creative.

by Kelly Ryan Kegans



*Photographs by Chad Holder*

**Park Avenue Associates**, 2615 Park Ave., Mpls.

- Built: 1930
- Style: Renaissance Revival (exterior), art deco (interior)
- Architect: Martin Lindquist
- Floors: 6
- Number of units: 112

Often, when Bruce Gleason stepped out onto the veranda while visiting the American Swedish Institute, he would look across the street and ask himself, “Why am I not living *there*?” About a year ago, the University of St. Thomas music professor put an end to that question when he bought a one-bedroom condo at the 2615 Park Avenue Associates building in Minneapolis.

The swanky co-op has long been home to some of the Twin Cities’ notables, including Swan Turnblad, builder of his namesake mansion at the ASI. Today, the Park Avenue building’s resident creatives range from university professors and museum curators to artists and theater performers.

“It’s the kind of place you drive by, but a lot of people don’t know you can buy into it,” says Julka Almquist, a five-year resident. “It’s like a New York City–style co-op. I love it here.”

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the 92-year-old building being converted from a residential hotel into a cooperative where residents own shares of the building based on the square footage of their apartments.

Recently, some of the residents invited us to take a look inside.



The lobby’s original features include mahogany millwork and etched-glass art deco lights.



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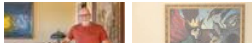
**Julka Almquist** *Research director Target*

“The daylight is incredible. The sunsets turn the whole apartment into a pretty pink color. People of all ages live here, but I’m probably one of the younger ones. I joke that I’m the resident IT person.”



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**Mark Laliberte** *Retired, IT*

“I’ve lived in the neighborhood for probably 25-plus years. In that time, I renovated two Victorians, one on Park and one on Portland. I would drive by here going downtown to work and say, ‘Someday, I’m going to live in that beautiful old building.’ I looked at quite a few units over the course of five years. I was really interested in finding one that had the original footprint. I’ve lived in New York City, so I understand how co-ops work. We used to have a [broader] menu of services. If I needed my mattress flipped, you could just order that for \$10. I love the proximity to downtown, the Greenway, parkways, lakes, and the light rail and bus line.”







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**Bruce Gleason** *Professor of music, University of St.*

*Thomas*

“I lucked out with the view; in the winter, I can see all the way to downtown through the trees. I lived in Lauderdale and had just finished restoring a house that took me 20 years. My office was in the upstairs of the carriage house I built, and while the space was lovely, the neighbors’ dogs across the alley were ridiculous. I decided I could be angry all the time or move. I chose the latter, and it was a wonderful decision. Now the only extraneous sounds I hear are sirens, but sirens are different because I know someone is being taken care of. I’ve lived here one year. I wanted to travel again, and it’s easier to travel from here. I just lock the door.”



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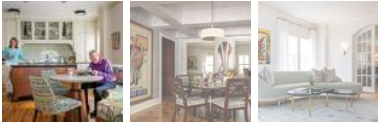


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**Lou and Jim Welter** *Retired, financial services (Lou); owner of a manufacturing firm (Jim)*

“I’ve lived here for 37 years, and Jim has been here 22 years. To combine our two units, we asked the association to purchase additional hall space to add a new entrance into a foyer. I didn’t think I would live here this long, but it has proven to be impossible to find a better place to live. Since I’ve lived here, I’ve noticed a shift to having younger residents, working professionals, and a wonderful representation of the LGBTQ community. There’s a level of sophistication here. I just love it.”

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**Kathy Hawkinson** *Retired assistant, Benilde-St. Margaret’s School*

“We bought a unit in 2013, which my daughter rented. Then my husband passed away, and when I sold the house, I was planning to move in. But my daughter said she wasn’t ready to leave, so I bought a different unit. I’ve been living here for five years, but I’ve been an owner here for nine.”

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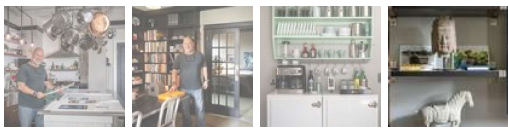


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**Mark Herman** *Graphic artist*

“I’ve lived here about three years. I always liked the height of the ceilings and the terrazzo floors. It used to be Loretta’s Tea Room—the doors are from that restaurant. There’s a ‘Free’ table by where I work out down here at night. I pick up a lot of weird stuff there.”

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**Sarah Noonan** *Professor emerita, University of St. Thomas*

“I’ve lived here 19 years. I have two daughters who also live in the building. One of my daughters, Johanna, is blind, and she’s in a studio apartment. My other daughter, Libby, is on the co-op board. I love it here because when I have a dinner party, I can swap out and move my dining table in here and fold up my desk to become a console. It’s flexible.”

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To read about more of the history about the building, check out the book, *“Biography of a Building: The Personalities of 2615 Park Avenue,”*

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*Building-Personalities-2615-*

*Avenue%2Fdp%2F0615235131&usg=AOvVaw1NLcSfEnW-nIo62uRcu20K*> written by longtime resident Mary Jo Thorsheim.

## Kelly Ryan Kegans

Kelly is a southern transplant who has been covering news and lifestyle for national, regional, and local publications for more than 25 years. She’s the Home and Design Editor at Mpls.St.Paul Magazine.