

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS
AND DISPOSITIONS

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC
SITINGS AND DISPOSITIONS

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November 13, 2025

Start: 1:17 p.m.

Recess: 2:22 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 3

B E F O R E: Christopher Marte, Acting
Chairperson

Sandy Nurse, Acting Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Amanda Farías

Yusef Salaam

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Duncan Miller, Senior Planner at New York City
Housing Preservation and Development

Lamont Bailey, Praise Temple

Margaret Herman, Director of Research at the New
York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Steven Thomson, Director of Community and
Intergovernmental Affairs

Richard Lobel, Sheldon Lobel PC

Kenneth Li, Fashion Tower owner

Dan Ruzzo, architect for Fashion Tower

Colleen Alderson, Chief of Parklands and Real
Estate of the Environments and Planning Division
at New York City Parks.

Elizabeth Ernish, Project Administrator for the
Planning Unit at New York City Parks

Matt Drury, Director of Government Relations for
New York City Parks

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SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sound check for the
Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and
Disposition. Today's date is November 13, 2025, being
recorded by Daniel Huang in HR3.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, and
welcome to today's New York City Council hearing from
the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and
Dispositions.

At this point, I'd like to remind
everyone to please silence their electronic devices,
and at no point going forward is anyone to approach
the dais.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: [GAVEL] Good
afternoon, and welcome to the meeting of the
Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and
Dispositions. I'm Council Member Christopher Marte,
and I'll be the Acting Chair of the Subcommittee
today.

Before we begin with today's agenda, I
will remind everyone that this meeting is being held
in a hybrid format. For members of the public who
wish to testify remotely, we ask that you first
register online, and you may do so now by visiting

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www.council.nyc.gov/landuse to sign up, and then sign
into the Zoom, and remain signed in until you have
testified.

For anyone with us today in person and
wishing to testify, if you have not already done so,
please see one of our Sergeant-at-Arms to fill out a
speaker's card, and we will call your name at the
appropriate time.

For anyone wishing to submit written
testimony on the items being heard today, we ask that
you please send it via email to
landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov, including the LU
number and/or the project name in the subject line of
your email. Video and audio testimonies will not be
accepted.

I will remind members of the public that
this is a government proceeding, and that decorum
shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
the public shall remain silent unless and until
called to testify.

The witness table is reserved for people
who wish to testify. No video recording or
photography is allowed from the witness table.

Further, members of the public may not present audio

or video recording as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such recording to the Sergeant for inclusion in the hearing record.

Today, we will hold three hearings. A joint hearing on the applications by the Landmarks and Preservation Commission for five landmark properties in Midtown Manhattan; a joint hearing on the applications by the Department of Parks concerning acquisition authority for parkland in Queens Community District 3 and Brooklyn Community District 5; and an application by HPD concerning Praise Tabernacle, a property located in Queens.

We will now hold a public hearing for LU 433, Praise Tabernacle, an application brought by Housing Preservation and Development seeking the designation of an urban development action area and the approval of an urban development action area project to facilitate the conservation of an existing community facility in Speaker Adams' District in Queens.

Appearing today on this proposal are Kevin Parris, Duncan Miller, and Lamont Bailey.

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council.nyc.gov/land use. Panelists, please ensure
that your microphones are on, which is indicated by
the light.

Counsel, would you please administer the
affirmation?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, would you
please raise your right hand and state your name for
the record?

DUNCAN MILLER: Duncan Miller.

LAMONT BAILEY: Lamont Bailey.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell
the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
in your testimony before the Subcommittee and in
answer to all Council Member questions?

DUNCAN MILLER: Yes.

LAMONT BAILEY: Yes.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: Thank you,
applicant panelists.

For the viewing public, if you need an
accessible version of this presentation, please send
an email request to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

And now applicant's team may begin.

Before we begin, I want to recognize Council Member
Salaam.

You guys can proceed.

DUNCAN MILLER: Thank you very much,
Council Member. My name is Duncan Miller. I'm with
HPD, and I'm here to present on Praise Tabernacle.
Today, we have a brief presentation. We'll go over
backgrounds of the project and the proposed land use
actions, and I'll turn it over to my partner, Lamont
Bailey, who will discuss a bit of information about
Praise Tabernacle and the benefits of the actions to
the church and the community. Next slide, please.

So, the Praise Tabernacle Church is
located in Jamaica, Queens, at the corner of Sutphin
Boulevard and 108th Avenue. The existing church
building sits across two different lots, block 10141,
lots 54, and lot 87, which is highlighted in red. Lot
87 is owned by HPD, and lot 54 is owned by the
church. The remaining portion of lot 87 that is not
occupied by the church is vacant. Next slide, please.

As you can see here, HPD, as a housing
agency, explored the potential for developing housing
on the vacant portion of the site, but ultimately
determined that this was infeasible. As you can see
in the image, the vacant portion is very narrow.
There's only around 30 feet between the existing

church building and the property line, which is demarcated by the fence. Due to rear and side yard zoning requirements and the existing rear and basement entrances to the church building, ultimately, housing is infeasible. So, because of this, HPD is seeking to convey lot 87 to conserve the existing community facility use. Next slide, please.

For a bit of background as to how this lot came to be in this condition today, in 1940, the existing church building was constructed and sat across lots 54 and the previous lot 79, which is outlined in blue. Fast forward to 1984, the City acquired lot 79 in rem due to back taxes, and this lot was included in the South Jamaica Urban Renewal Plan, Second Amendment, and subsequently subdivided into lots 79, 80, 83, 85, and 87. Most of these lots, aside from lot 87, were conveyed and redeveloped as new homes, and lot 87 today remains in HPD ownership and undeveloped, of course, aside from the portion occupied by the church. Next slide, please.

So, HPD is seeking the designation of an Urban Development Action Area and the approval of an Urban Development Action Area project. Next slide.

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I will now turn it over to my partner,
Lamont Bailey, who will discuss Praise Tabernacle.

LAMONT BAILEY: Good afternoon. Next
slide, please.

Praise Tabernacle was established in
1979. It's an independent church. It meets weekly,
has weekly services, as well as midweek services as
well. Its community services include after-school
care, a youth program, overcomers fellowship, and
events such as weddings and funerals. It also has a
school of urban ministry. Praise Tabernacle is not
only inward, but it's outward and serves the
community. Many community organizations use the hall
to have their meetings. Non-members can have funerals
when their churches or the locations are too small
for a funeral, and the same thing for weddings and
weddings receptions, and community organizations also
meet at the church. That's how Praise Tabernacle not
only supports its own members, but supports the
community. The benefits of the proposed action is
this will allow Praise Tabernacle to make
improvements to its church facility. It also gives it
financial benefits, as it will be able to finance and
expand and improve the facility. It also gives Praise

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Tabernacle and its members future viability and
certainty. Not having ownership of a part of the
church edifice is a problem for the congregation. I
talked about the community benefits already, the
community outreach programs, community events, the
afterschool programs, and weddings and funerals.
Thank you.

DUNCAN MILLER: We're now available to
answer any questions. Thank you very much.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: I want to
recognize Majority Leader Amanda Farías.

No questions from us. Do you have
anything else?

DUNCAN MILLER: That's it today. Thank you
very much.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: Counsel, are
there any members of the public who wish to testify
on this item?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, there are not.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: Thank you.

DUNCAN MILLER: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: There being no
other members of the public who wish to testify
regarding the public hearing on LU 433 for Praise

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Tabernacle, the public hearing is now closed, and the
item is laid over.

We will now hold the joint public hearing
on several applications brought by Landmark
Preservation Commission for a landmark designation
for the following properties. LU 415, Barbey
Building, a designation of a building in a
Renaissance Revival style with terracotta ornaments
located at 1517 West 38th in Council Member Powers'
District in Manhattan; LU 416, 27th Street Tower, a
designation of a pair of connected 14 and 16 story
Gothic Revival style commercial buildings located at
214-222 West 29th Street in Council Member Bottcher's
District in Manhattan; LU 417, Fashion Tower, a
designation of the 20-story garment industry showroom
in the office building displaying Renaissance Revival
and Art Deco style elements located at 135 West 36th
Street in Council Member Bottcher's District in
Manhattan; LU 418, Furcraft Building, a designation
of a building with neoclassical designs and prominent
fox sculptures located at 242-246 West 30th Street in
Council Member Bottcher's District in Manhattan; LU
419, Leftcourt Clothing Center, a 27-story Art Deco
loft building located at 275 7th Avenue in Council

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Member Bottcher's District in Manhattan. These properties all have connections to the Garment District and the City's history in fashion and garment industry.

Appearing today on this proposal on behalf of the City's Department of Landmarks Preservation Commission are Steven Thomson and Margaret Herman.

Those wishing to testify remotely must register online by visiting Council website at www.council.nyc.gov/landuse.

Panelists, please ensure that your microphones are on, which is indicated by the light.

Counsel, please administer the affirmation.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, would you please raise your right hand and state your names for the record?

MARGARET HERMAN: Margaret Herman.

STEVEN THOMSON: Steven Thompson.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this Subcommittee and in answer to all Council Member questions?

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MARGARET HERMAN: I do.

STEVEN THOMSON: I do.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: Thank you,
applicant. You guys may proceed.

MARGARET HERMAN: Good afternoon. My name
is Margaret Herman, Director of Research at the
Landmarks Preservation Commission. Thank you for the
opportunity to present our recent individual landmark
designations in Midtown South. Next slide, please.

On August 12, 2025, the New York City
Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate
five buildings in Midtown South Manhattan as
individual landmarks. The Barbey Building, Fashion
Tower, the Furcraft Building, 29th Street Towers, and
the Leftcourt Clothing Center. These buildings were
identified as part of LPC's Midtown South Initiative,
a comprehensive study of LPC's work in the
neighborhood that began in 2023 in coordination with
the Department of City Planning's Midtown South Mixed
Use Plan. As part of this initiative, our research
staff studied the area's history, previous survey
work, and LPC designations and analyzed the
significance and condition of approximately 90
buildings. We then developed a framework to

illustrate the area's historic development patterns to identify thematic gaps that could be addressed through new designations. We found that although LPC's previous designations covered a range of historical eras in Midtown South, including the mid-19th century residential period and the neighborhood's history as an entertainment district and business center in the early 20th century, LPC's designations mostly did not include the key period from around 1910 to 1930 when Midtown South transformed into the Garment Center. To address this gap in our designations, LPC's initiative identified five potential landmarks that capture this important Garment Center chapter in the neighborhood's history. The buildings are impressive examples of early 20th century commercial architecture designed by some of the city's leading architects, which help to tell the full story of the Garment District's historic development. LPC worked closely with the Department of City Planning, elected officials, and key stakeholders in the community throughout the process, and we met with every property owner, and we were thrilled to designate these five buildings in August. Next slide.

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The Barbey Building at 15 to 17 West 38th Street was built in 1908 to 1909. Designed by an architectural firm of Delano and Aldrich, the Barbey Building was one of the earliest tall loft buildings in Midtown, setting the stage for the development of an entire neighborhood that would become the center for the fashion and garment industries. On May 20th, 2025, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Barbey Building as an individual landmark.

Representatives of the Historic Districts Council, New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Art Deco Society of New York spoke in support of designation. No one spoke in opposition. Next slide.

The Barbey Building is located on West 38th Street near 5th Avenue, and the landmark site is the Tax Lot. Next slide.

The building's cladding is dark red brick and terracotta, accenting the façade with stylish classical ornament. A distinctive decorative panel at the top displays the construction date in raised Roman numerals. The building's sophisticated façade design foreshadowed later commercial and industrial skyscrapers. Next slide.

Over the years, the building housed many kinds of companies, including garment factories, publishing firms, and architectural offices. From 1985 to 2019, the building served as the corporate headquarters for the Lord and Taylor Department Store, located around the corner, and is now home to a variety of commercial tenants. Next slide.

The Barbey Building today remains an outstanding example of one of the earliest tall loft buildings constructed in what became the Midtown Garment Center. Next slide.

Fashion Tower is a 20-story commercial building in Manhattan's Garment Center, designed by architect Emery Roth and built in 1924 to 1925. The building stands out in the neighborhood for its distinctive blend of Medieval, Renaissance, and Art Deco styles, and decoration at the base that expresses the building's connection to the garment industry. On May 20th, 2025, LPC held a public hearing on the proposed designation of Fashion Tower as an individual landmark. A representative of the building's owner spoke in opposition, while representatives of the Historic Districts Council and

the New York Landmarks Conservancy spoke in support
of designation. Next slide.

Fashion Tower is located on West 36th
Street near Broadway, and the proposed landmark site
is the Tax Lot. Next slide.

Fashion Tower's ribbed piers rise without
interruption from a multi-story base to setbacks at
the upper floors. Decoration on the lower floors
include colorful terracotta peacocks, feathery
symbols of fashion and vanity at the freight and
lobby entrances, while the floors above feature the
building's name flanked by winged angels holding
fabric shears and artist brushes. The use of such
business-related symbolism is rare in the Garment
Center. Next slide.

With a distinctive decorative scheme
evoking its historic use, Fashion Tower is one of the
most impressive buildings in the Garment Center. Next
slide.

The Furcraft Building is a monument to
the section of Manhattan known as the Fur District
and to New York's leading role in the international
fur business in the 20th century. At the public
hearing on May 20, 2025, representatives of the New

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York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts
Council, Art Deco Society of New York, and Save
Chelsea spoke in support of designation, and no one
spoke in opposition. Next slide.

The Furcraft Building is located on West
30th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues, and the
landmark site is the tax lot. Next slide.

In the Furcraft Building, architect Henry
Oser skillfully blended the setback requirements of
the zoning code with the neoclassical style. Much of
his ornament is at the ground story, where a bronze
and terracotta entrance is topped with two alert
foxes. These foxes are perhaps the most striking
reminder of the business of the old Fur District.
Next slide.

Today, the Furcraft Building houses a
variety of commercial tenants while continuing to
recall an industry with a rich and complex history in
which New York once led the world. Next slide.

The 29th Street Towers was also built for
the fur industry and is an architecturally
significant reminder of this part of New York's
garment trade. At the public hearing on May 20th,
2025, representatives of the New York Landmarks

Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, Art Deco
Society of New York, and Save Chelsea spoke in
support of designation. No one spoke in opposition.
Next slide.

The two connected buildings of 214 and
226 West 29th Street are located between 7th and 8th
Avenues. The landmark site consists of both tax lots.
Next slide.

Also designed by architect Henry Oser,
here he created an unusual arrangement of setbacks,
alternating both the bays and widths of the setbacks,
resulting in a visual interest that's uniform across
the two towers. Next slide.

The structures are tied together by a
variegated terracotta cladding across the entire
first story, framing the entrance and historic iron
storefronts. Sculptures alternate on either side of
the entrance, featuring a man feeding a beaver then
inspecting its pelt, symbolic of the work done in the
building and in the broader fur industry. Next slide.

The 29th Street Towers recalls New York
City's fur trade history and its unique decoration
and unusual setbacks make the building an important
example of garment center architecture. Next slide.

And finally, the Leftcourt Clothing Center is a 27-story Art Deco loft building in the Garment District, designed by Eli Jacques Kahn of the firm of Buckman and Kahn. At the public hearing on May 20th, 2025, representatives of Community Board 4, New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, Art Deco Society of New York, and Save Chelsea spoke in support of designation. No one spoke in opposition. Next slide.

The Leftcourt Clothing Center is located at 275 7th Avenue between West 25th and West 26th Street, and the landmark site is a tax lot. Next slide.

Eli Jacques Kahn was a prominent New York City architect working in the Art Deco style. He used patterned brickwork and decorative cast iron window enframements in the Leftcourt Clothing Center to create eye-catching geometric ornament across the facade. Next slide.

Along with garment manufacturers and showrooms, one of the most important tenants of the Leftcourt Clothing Center was the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. One benefit the ILGWU provided to members was its health center, which

moved into the 25th floor of the Leftcourt Clothing
Center in 1935. Next slide.

In 1945, the ILGWU bought the entire
building at 275 7th Avenue, occupying five floors and
leasing out the rest to tenants. Today, the Leftcourt
Clothing Center is still owned by the union, which is
now known as Unite Here, and represents workers in
the garment and hospitality industries. Next slide.

The Leftcourt Clothing Center reflects
the important history of both the garment industry
and union history in the neighborhood.

And that concludes our presentation.
Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions
about these designations.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: There's no
questions from our side, and I don't believe there's
any...

We excuse the applicant.

MARGARET HERMAN: Thank you very much.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARTE: I'm going to
recognize Council Member Nurse and relinquish my
powers and let her continue.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Sorry, we've
had musical Chairs today.

We're going to call up Richard Lobel and
Kenneth L.

RICHARD LOBEL: Should be Dan Ruzzo, who
said he's in the waiting room.

Have you found him? If you could, it's
kind of important.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: (INAUDIBLE)

RICHARD LOBEL: All right.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: They can go
first now.

RICHARD LOBEL: He says yes. He still
hasn't been let in. Should I have him log out and log
in again?

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: We're still
working out this side of the building.

RICHARD LOBEL: Right. The tech's great.
He's going to rejoin.

He rejoined. He's going to dial in.

The meeting ID they sent me doesn't
exist. It won't connect me by dial-in. I'm in the
Zoom waiting room.

KENNETH LI: Maybe you can just call your
phone and you can hold it up to the microphone. Or
does that not record onto the system?

1 He hasn't received it yet.

2 Oh, here we go. The meeting ID doesn't
3 work. Link's bad. Zoom is saying it's an invalid
4 meeting.
5

6 Conference phone right on the TV. I can't
7 even dial a set. So, huh.

8 Okay, do you want me to try it? I can put
9 my phone on speaker and see if you can, if you can
10 hear him, then we can, he's going to be going third.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Checking about
12 the legality.

13 RICHARD LOBEL: Oh. Okay.

14 ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: If he's able to
15 listen to the live stream, maybe he can text you
16 anything that is a specific question for him?

17 RICHARD LOBEL: Yeah, so.

18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: But if he's
19 just reading his text, it'd be the same thing as
20 getting a note from.

21 RICHARD LOBEL: Okay. So we've got written
22 testimony we can submit from him.

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, great.
24 Yeah.
25

RICHARD LOBEL: Okay. Good afternoon.

Richard Lobel of Sheldon Lobel. I'm here on behalf of
135 West 36th Street. And very briefly with regards
to the five matters that are before the Council
today, four of those had no opposition. We do present
opposition here, and there's very good reasons and
Ken's going to talk about his family, their history
in the Garment Center, their ownership of this
building for decades. But basically there's a few
discrete points we would make as far as why we really
strongly contest the landmarking here. The first is
that it conflicts with very important citywide
priorities. The Midtown South Rezoning, which was
approved in August, 2025. One of the goals of that
was to produce housing and, importantly,
affordability. We have a building here, which is
ready to be converted to housing, specifically over
120 units of market rate housing or of housing
generally, and over 30 units of affordable housing,
very real goals and Dan Ruzzo's testimony will
support that this would make it increasingly
difficult to do so. The second is the weak
architectural case posed by Landmarks, which is
basically that this is a valuable Emory Roth

building. This building was not even cited in the most recent Architects Institute of America guide inciting Emory Roth's work within the city. They cited 40 of his works, this one was not even included. It just doesn't have the architectural import. Third, the façade here that is described by Landmarks as being eye-catching and the peacocks which were called out, those were the result of Ken's hard work on the building in 2015. Without any type of input from Landmarks whatsoever, he basically spent the time and care to restore that façade. In fact, the peacocks that are cited in the report are not even 30 years old, which is a requirement for landmarking. Briefly, the last two points is that Ken has been a responsible owner, as he will tell you. There is no need to landmark this building. Finally, the building itself is overbuilt. The overbuilt condition is by 25,000 square feet. He can't demolish this building, nor would he want to. This building has an important history in his family, and it's something that he wishes to preserve. Indeed, when nobody was watching, he did so.

With that, I would ask that the Chair and the Committee strongly consider this as being the

only landmarked issue today which did not receive
building-specific testimony in favor. Thank you.

KENNETH LI: Good afternoon, Chair and
Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the
opportunity to present. My name is Kenneth Li, and my
family has owned the building since 2002. My family's
history is interwoven with that of the Garment
District. We moved here in 1975, like thousands of
other immigrants, and we made it from basically
nothing. In 2002, we bought the building. Since 1981,
our family has operated a garment and fashion
business in New York City, and that building has
served as our headquarters for our business. We
oppose the landmark designation of the building. When
we purchased the building, its original ground floor
had been completely stripped away. In 2012, I studied
urban studies at Brown, and I dug up the original
drawings myself, and me and my friend, we restored
the original 1920s building. The original terracotta
peacocks which they cited, I bought them myself and
then restored it to its original building. My goal
then, as it is now, is to celebrate the Fashion
District while maintaining the economic viability of
the building that has been so meaningful to my

family's story. The fact is, like many buildings in the Garment District, our building is no longer a bustling manufacturing hub. Midtown South Rezoning provides an opportunity for this building, which is not profitable right now, to respond to market forces and deliver needed housing. The landmark designation came at the exact same time as Midtown South Rezoning, which I've been waiting for for 10 years. As the Committee likely knows, this conversion of commercial buildings to residential is challenging. Our building was overbuilt, so it's in no danger of demolition, and we'd reallocate a significant amount of floor area to comply with the rear yard requirements. However, this LPC designation makes it 30 percent more expensive to make this building into residential, which would make it impossible for a family-owned company like myself to even do this, creating more housing for the city. While I appreciate the City's recognition of our façade restoration, which I did myself, I can't help but feel as though my family is now being punished for doing the right thing for our building and our community, as well as being an original, or not an original, but a Garment (TIMER CHIME) Fashion

District family that has been there for over 20
years.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I have a couple
questions, and sorry I wasn't here earlier. I am on
this Committee, but I had a bill and another hearing,
and I missed their testimony.

You're saying that the designation would
increase the cost by 30 percent of renovating or
doing the conversion.

KENNETH LI: Yeah.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Have you
started a process of assessing that?

KENNETH LI: Yeah, we have an architect.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And what is
that 30 percent differential?

KENNETH LI: A lot of time, and then there
needs to be a five-yard setback, and then there are,
the currently, since it touches the façade, since the
LPC designation will make a façade, it will make
getting approval for that façade pretty much
impossible. And then there's a lot of additional
time. I think another 12 to 14 months is what Dan,
the architect on the Zoom, kind of calculated for us.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Oh, okay.

Dan, do you want to chime in with some
testimony?

DAN RUZZO: Sure. Hello, Council. Thank
you for your time today. Regarding the cost...

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Hold on a
second. I want to make sure the audio is working
well.

Yeah, I know my mic is on.

DAN RUZZO: Can the Committee...

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Oh, okay. Okay,
go ahead.

DAN RUZZO: Can the Committee hear me? Oh,
all right. Thank you, everyone, for your time today.

Regarding cost basis and how that
analysis arises, under a designation, we'll obviously
assume that this project will be a commission-level
approval. We'll have, obviously, the public hearing
components. We were looking to go in and file and
begin the work product almost immediately. Once we do
that, that would probably put us at a filing with
Landmarks just before summer and getting into the DOB
equally just before summer. We tend to do both
filings simultaneously as the two want to run hand-
in-hand. When filing with Landmarks, there tends to

be a delay, typically through the summer period, in order to obtain any type of a commission approval so we expect that there's going to be a delay there. That's been our experience over multiple years in dealing with the LPC and in terms of our filings with the LPC so we'll have a delay there. On top of that, the commission-level approval will require a mock-up. We'll have to do a mock-up of the relocated floor area. City of Yes has been great, and it's really going to help this district tremendously and many districts throughout the city that are looking to do a conversion of this type, and it has relaxed the regulations. But we still have to make the building comply with light and air, whereas it previously would not have. A residential just requires a light and air, especially on the rear façade, once that is programmed. So, we would have to remove a minimum of five feet and, more precisely, probably closer to 10 feet off the rear of the building. That floor area would then be relocated to the top of the building as it is overbuilt, and we are allowed to maintain it as long as we do it under the same application. And we would need to maintain it in order for the metrics of the project to work under an adaptive reuse. Once

that floor area is relocated, we need to do a mock-up with the Landmarks to show them sight lines. The mock-up is done in a temporary construction that would just identify what the proposed new bulk of the building would be. That would be subject to the Commission's approval and review as to whether they will accept the new bulk. (TIMER CHIME) So that raises a specter of uncertainty on whether the relocated floor area will be accepted. It also raises the issue of time. We equate a Landmark's process for approval to an increase in approval time of roughly eight months and even as much as one year in order to obtain the approval. And then a lender looks at it as an additional risk, an additional unknown that they don't know, as it is a discretionary approval, and there's no way we can say whether or not it would be accepted for the project. We can look at the DOB code and we can look at the building code requirements, both in terms of zoning code and building code, and those are pretty black and white. The designation process, again, just raises the concern that it is a discretionary process and now we're discussing whether or not the new construction would make sense, whether it fits within the existing, etc., etc. So

the mock-up alone would cost nearly 200,000 dollars
of additional costs on the project...

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'm sorry,
because we're a little bit over time for the time of
testimony, my question was about the cost difference.
I mean, all projects have mock-ups that I've ever
seen, so that's not a new cost to you.

DAN RUZZO: Well, all landmark projects
have mock-ups. If you're not landmarked, you don't
have a mock-up. So in that case...

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: You still need
to go through a process of designing the building.

DAN RUZZO: Correct.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I was just
asking, what was the cost difference? You're saying
there's a 30 percent cost that would be incurred
above and beyond what is normal. So that was my
question. If you don't have that answer, that's fine.

DAN RUZZO: So it is a 30 percent cost
based on the time that it takes to get us through the
Commission process and the approval process and the
construction of the mock-up.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Understood. And
I can't bring Landmarks up at this point because of

the way the hearings are structured. I can? Okay,
sorry. You know, we just started here today.

I did have a question to Landmarks. Do
you all provide grants? Can I bring someone up? Just
one. It's just one question. I'm not going to badger.
I just was curious if you all have financial
assistance or grant programs for the extraordinary
additional costs that construction in a landmarks
building provides?

MARGARET HERMAN: We do have a small grant
program. I think that's mostly for non-profits and
things like that. There's also State programs like
tax credits and things of that nature. But, you know,
just to respond somewhat to that testimony, I can't
speak to the specifics of this particular project.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Well, I don't
mean to go through a back and forth because I'm just
bringing you up to ask a specific question and I
don't think that would be fair to the... But I would
request in the follow-up if you could provide any
financial assistance or any type of financial relief
that could be made, that could be available to the
owner, the developer in this process. Thank you so
much.

MARGARET HERMAN: Thanks.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And lastly, you would be... you're looking to do housing. Is any of this going to be affordable? Is there an MIH in here?

RICHARD LOBEL: Yeah, there is MIH.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

RICHARD LOBEL: So there is MIH of the proposed 120 units, roughly 25 percent of those, or greater than 30 units would be affordable, which is, I think, one of the reasons that we were excited about moving forward with this.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So, there will be.

And then understanding that this building was constructed in 1924, you've all had it for 25?

KENNETH LI: 2002.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Whatever, so my math, like 23 years?

Look, I know there are neighborhoods clamoring to get landmark status for some of their beautiful buildings. These buildings are important to the history of New York City. I understand what you're laying out here, but I definitely want to make sure we have an understanding of what is available to

you to help with the cost of that. I understand the timeline makes it more costly because you have to pay people for a longer amount of time, but hopefully we can get that followup, which I think would just be helpful for consideration.

KENNETH LI: Just as a final point, I grew up my whole life in fashion. My aunties are all sewing workers from Chinatown, from the Garment District. We've restored that building to the fashion character it is. It will never go away as I own the building.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Do you have plans - and maybe our architect can answer this - I mean, I know I have a building in my District that they preserved the front façade and still were able to put the modern, ugly looking, fast going up towers behind it. But do you have plans in that?

KENNETH LI: It's already overbuilt, so we wouldn't touch any of the fronts. If you touch it, you can't build it.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.
Understood.

Okay, I don't have any further questions,
unless there were questions the other Chair had.
Okay.

Okay, well, being that there's no one
else, thank you so much for your testimony.

RICHARD LOBEL: Thank you, Chair.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: There are no
other members of the public who wish to testify
regarding this joint public hearing on Land Use Item
415 through 419 for the landmark designation of
Barbey Building, 29th Street Towers, Fashion Tower,
Furcraft Building, and Leftcourt Clothing Center, the
public hearing is now closed and the items are laid
over. Thank you so much.

We will now hold a joint public hearing
for Land Use 420, Brooklyn's Community District 5,
site selection and acquisition and Land Use Item 421,
Queens Community District 3, site selection and
acquisition. These applications are brought by the
Department of Parks and Recreation, along with DCAS
for approval of City acquisition and site selection
of privately owned properties for future park
development in Brooklyn Community District 5 and in
Queens Community District 3. These proposals seek to

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create new parkland to increase access to open space,
resources for neighborhoods located in my District,
as well as Council Member Banks in Brooklyn and
Council Members Cabán, Krishan, and Moya's District
in Queens.

Appearing today in this panel are Colleen
Alderson, Elizabeth Ernish, and Matt Drury.

Those wishing to testify remotely must
register online by visiting the Council's website at
council.nyc.gov/landuse.

Panelists, please ensure that your
microphone is on, which is indicated by the light.

Counsel, would you please administer the
affirmation?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, would you
please raise your right hand and state your names for
the record?

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Colleen Alderson.

ELIZABETH ERNISH: Elizabeth Ernish.

MATT DRURY: Matt Drury.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And do you affirm to
tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
truth in your testimony before this Subcommittee and
in answer to all Council Member questions?

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COLLEEN ALDERSON: I do.

ELIZABETH ERNISH: I do.

MATT DRURY: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
proceed.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Good afternoon, Chair
Nurse and members of the Subcommittee. Again, my name
is Colleen Alderson. I'm the Chief of Parklands and
Real Estate, part of the Environments and Planning
Division at New York City Parks. I'm joined by my
colleague Elizabeth Ernish, a Project Administrator
for the Planning Unit, and also Matt Drury, the
Director of Government Relations for New York City
Parks. Next slide.

I'm here to present to the Committee
Parks' applications to site select and acquire
parcels for future park development in Brooklyn
Community District 5 and Queens Community District 3.
New York City Parks is the applicant, with DCAS as
the co-applicant. These applications are part of an
effort to address some of the most underserved
neighborhoods in the city in terms of public open
space. Next slide.

As we are all aware, parks are critical infrastructure for urban areas. Beyond places to rest and recreate, parks provide necessary space for social connections, environmental benefits like cleaner air and resilience to climate-related disasters, physical and mental health benefits for New York City residents. These factors inform Parks pursuing a new strategy to realize new parks in underserved communities. Next slide.

Many citywide plans and policies advocate for the importance and creation of new parks, particularly in underserved areas. OneNYC set the goal of 85 percent of New Yorkers living within a walk to a park by 2030. The Mayor's Office Get Stuff Built report contained a specific initiative encouraging New York City Parks to pursue a new type of ULURP authorization for land acquisition using criteria-based triggers. Next slide.

Regarding the OneNYC goal of 85 percent of New Yorkers living within a walk to a park by 2030, we're currently at 84.2 percent, which sounds healthy, but that means that there are still 1.4 million New Yorkers in gap areas, those areas in red on the citywide map. These are New Yorkers not in a

walking distance to a public open space. A park in an appropriate walking distance from where people live is a key indicator in determining if people are accessing a park for all the benefits they provide. We also believe this focused effort will help address the availability of parkland within densely populated areas that may not have a walk to a park gap area, but address the downward trend of the city's median open space ratio. The open space ratio is a measure of how much open space per 1,000 residents is at a citywide median of 1.14, while in 2017 it was 1.4, and higher years prior. Next slide.

Vital Parks for All is Parks' current focused effort to improve the quality of our parks network throughout the city. It is an investment strategy that provides transparency through a mapping tool and assesses the quality and quantity of existing park resources to determine where the agency should direct its funding and resources. Next slide.

Growing green spaces is our focused area in Vital Parks for All to expand access to park resources in underserved areas. This has been carried out through a partnership in part with the Department of Education, working towards opening up more

schoolyards that are available to the communities outside of school operating hours. We've also partnered with NYCHA to create new public access areas on campuses targeting underserved areas. Three have been completed in Queens and one in Brooklyn.

Next slide.

Despite these initiatives to expand park access and the extent of New Yorkers beyond a walking distance to a park, we still face significant hurdles to creating needed public open space. One of the most significant challenges we face is the length of the ULURP process, which is around two to three years from the onset of identifying of potential properties for park development to the actual closing of the contract of acquiring the property from a seller.

This ULURP effort aims to assist in the City's acquisition approval process in the context of limited, vacant, available land, property owners not being aware the City is interested and serious about acquiring land for parks, that long-term line that I spoke about, and also the inability to negotiate with property owner before ULURP approval. Most sellers are not willing to wait the time it takes to get through ULURP to start to negotiate. Next slide.

The neighborhood-scale ULURP project was prompted by that Get Stuff Built initiative that I mentioned earlier. This project aims to provide the required acquisition land use approval for a number of pre-identified sites suitable for parkland development and enable us to enter directly into negotiations with willing sellers. Having ULURP approval in hand, we can shorten the acquisition process to realize new parks for underserved communities.

I'm going to now turn it over to Elizabeth Ernish to go over the details of the applications.

ELIZABETH ERNISH: Thank you. Next slide, please.

In discussions with the Department of City Planning, we decided the community district would be the most appropriate scale for identifying the most underserved areas of the city. We developed two primary criteria to identify which community districts to include in this project. We looked at the walk-to-park analysis that a community district must have more than 15,000 people living in a walk-to-park gap per square mile. And then secondly, we

looked at districts where the open space ratio is below 1.3 or the poverty rate is higher than the city average of 17.9. Based on this criteria, we identified 19 community districts. Next slide, please.

In Queens Community District 3, over 50,000 residents are in underserved areas, and the open space ratio is low at 0.91 and poverty is at 22.3. In Brooklyn's Community District 5, over 25,000 residents are in underserved areas and the poverty rate meets the criteria at 27.7. Next slide, please.

Additional community district context. Both districts have parks with limited operating hours such as schoolyards and community gardens which aren't accessible throughout the day. Also, the recent community need statements for both districts requested more parks and recreational spaces. In Queens Community District 3, parks can help mitigate flooding in these neighborhoods and reduce harmful air pollutants, especially along traffic-heavy avenues such as Northern Boulevard. In Brooklyn Community District 5, there's been ongoing development following the East New York rezoning

approved in 2016 with about 4,000 more housing units currently underway. Next slide, please.

Now that we've identified the districts for our ULURP, we developed a criteria for identifying potential sites for the parkland development. Privately owned PLUTO Land Use Code 11 vacant, lots at least 5,000 square feet or an assemblage of multiple lots equaling 5,000 square feet, a viable site for park development, no active DOB permits indicating development and construction. And in the lower right, you can see this is an example of such a site in Community District 5. Next slide, please.

This is a map of the primary sites in Brooklyn Community District 5, and based on our criteria, there are seven. Next slide.

This is an example of a vacant site in Community District 5 which is surrounded by housing development. Next slide.

Here's another example of a vacant site in the Jewel Street Neighborhood Plan, also in Community District 5. Next slide.

This map depicts the location of primary sites through Queens Community District 3, and as you

can see, there are only five primary sites. Next
slide.

Here's an example of one of those sites.
It's a vacant lot on 97th Street. Next slide.

This is St. Mark's Church site. A portion
of that lot currently operates as a playground, and
we're very interested in acquiring it. There's also a
lot of community support for this site, as you can
see by the Community Board's recommendation. Next
slide.

However, given these criteria, we're left
with relatively few primary sites. To expand our
options, we developed a secondary site criteria. The
main difference between the primary and secondary
sites is that secondary sites are not vacant. They
are built up to less than 50 percent of their maximum
allowable floor area ratio. We also limit them to
walk-to-park gap areas to directly address the need
for parklands. Also, lots with residential uses were
excluded. Next slide, please.

This shows the secondary sites in
Brooklyn Community District 5. There are 16. Next
slide.

Here's a secondary site in District 5.

It's a car wash on Atlantic Avenue. Next slide.

Also in Community District 5, this is a
manufacturing site with parking along Fulton Street.
Next slide.

And in Queens Community District 3, this
map shows secondary sites throughout the district.
Based on our criteria, we have 16 sites. Next slide.

This example shows an Old Navy on 82nd
Street. Next slide.

This is a gas station along Astoria
Boulevard. Next slide.

This slide summarizes the total number of
sites that met our criteria. In Brooklyn Community
District 5, we have 23 sites. And in Queens Community
District 3, we have 21 sites. We do not intend to
acquire each of these sites. Just want to provide
options should the opportunities arise in the future.
Next slide.

We also wanted to flag that in
coordination with the Department of City Planning, we
developed a sunset clause of 10 years following the
approval date of this ULURP application. That means
that the application will expire after the 10-year

period, after which Parks may choose to submit a new application. Next slide.

We're happy to answer any questions.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you for that presentation. I just have a couple questions. Could you talk a little bit about the process for engaging owners of the sites?

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Sure. We're required through the ULURP process to send letters to each of the owners, explaining them when there were hearings along the ULURP process. Some owners did reach out with a variety of questions. They've never worked with the City selling property, didn't know what a ULURP meant, so basic things like that. Some property owners explained they might have different plans, saying not at this time. So, it did trigger some feedback from the owners over the period, over the last few months. And, you know, we'll continue to follow up with them. We've laid out...

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Those are owners of the specific lots here.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Correct.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: They've had other plans and they're not interested.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: At this time, I know one owner said... a couple of them did say they had different plans so weren't interested in selling. I did say that, you know, sometimes plans change, you know, we're going to explain what we're doing with this application.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: So we have the option if their plans change.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And for the sites included in this application, when it comes time to acquire, is there any possibility of only taking partial piece of the lot, or would you want the whole thing?

COLLEEN ALDERSON: It depends on the site. Some sites are very small. We've set forth a minimum 5,000 square feet. So, for the larger sites that might be 20,000 square feet, we would be open if they are interested in selling a portion of their site. The St. Mark's property is specifically in the application only for a portion of the site so we're open to that. 5,000 square feet is our minimum, and required as part of the ULURP meeting the criteria.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Some of the slides that were in Community District 5 in Brooklyn, I know one of them is literally right behind my office, the car wash. That car wash is pretty new, I believe. And I guess I'm wondering how you're thinking about that in relationship to the two public plazas that are going to be built, and the playground that was just renovated.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Callahan-Kelly?

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Well, I'm not sure. That owner, I don't believe, has contacted me so I'm not sure if there's any interest there. And I don't know if you want to speak to the other nearby plaza projects, but if a property owner is not interested, we're not looking to pursue it. One requirement, City Planning Commission, should the ULURP application be approved, we will be sending letters again to the owners explaining that we have approval, to please be in contact if they're interested.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I think beyond a letter, I mean, I'm familiar with the plaza projects. I don't need any explanation on it. I'm just saying it seems pretty in close proximity.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Sure.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So it doesn't,
in my mind, I'm like, just because I walk there all
the time to Broadway Junction, like it's not, it's
very close.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Understood.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I guess besides
just a letter, I feel like a phone call or in-person
touch would be important.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Sure.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Given how big
that kind of decision is.

And then I saw one in an industrial zone,
I think on Fulton Street. I personally would be
against that. We've worked really hard to preserve
manufacturing. We've gone through a whole process
with the manufacturing plan of the City, and we're
really trying to keep those where they are. So many
of them are, a lot of sites are being moved into
shelter, which I don't have a problem with shelters,
but in a manufacturing space feels weird to place
people in.

I have a question about a property in
Queens Community District 3. The Borough President

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recommended the removal of a particular site, 90-01
23rd Ave., from the secondary parcel list. Can you
speak to this request?

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Yes, I'm familiar with
that. That was one site I believe the Community Board
actually was in favor of. It's a pretty large site. I
believe the owner does have different plans, and I
think perhaps that was communicated, and that's why
the Borough President was speaking on that owner's
behalf. The City Planning Commission did not reject
that site in their review, so I'll just say that. But
again, from my conversation at this time, the owner
wasn't interested, and we've been specifically
charged to looking for willing sellers so we didn't
remove it from our application.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And so
what does that mean if you don't remove it from the
application, if they're not a willing seller, just
for the record? Does that mean this gets approved,
and that is now?

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Well, you know,
sometimes people change their plans. So just having
the approval, at least we have that in place, and we

don't have to go through you up again kind of thing
so I think that's the idea there.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I
appreciate it. I know I've been briefed on this
before by Parks. It just feels like a decade ago from
right now. I apologize. I'm trying to keep it all
present.

Last question about Brooklyn Community
District 5. There is a property 1091 Loring Ave.,
which was included as a secondary site. It also sits
within an industrial business zone boundary, has been
cited as a potential area for residential development
in the Jewel Streets study area. Can you share where
you all have landed on this?

COLLEEN ALDERSON: We haven't pulled or
written to City Planning to pull any sites, so it's
still in our application. I wasn't aware of that. And
I do know that in our discussions with the Borough
President's office, we spoke about IBZ, and we did
actually take out some sites, but there was one left
in. I'm happy to follow up on this one. But if they
have other plans, we wouldn't be pursuing it.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right. Okay.
Those are my only questions.

My comment is that we're always, I appreciate the overall effort to add more parks to the city. We love parks. I think it's the challenge of the maintenance and enforcement in the parks that remains a chronic challenge for at least all my Colleagues in Brooklyn, I'm sure in other parts of the city. And I just hope that something like this comes with more resources so that we don't have to call you guys screaming all the time.

Okay. Thank you so much for your testimony. You are dismissed.

COLLEEN ALDERSON: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And I don't believe we have anyone.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There is no testifying.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. As there is no one available or interested in testifying regarding this joint public hearing on Land Use Item 420 and Land Use Item 421, the public hearing is now closed, and this item is laid over.

That concludes today's business.

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I would like to thank the members of the
public, my Colleagues, Subcommittee Counsel, Land Use
Staff, and Sergeant-at-Arms for your participation.

This meeting is hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 1, 2025