

Land Use
Subcommittee
on Landmarks, Public
Siting & Maritime
Uses

Date	6-20-08
Start Time	
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**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY
COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON
THE DESIGNATION OF THE FREE PUBLIC BATHS, MANHATTAN
June 2, 2008**

Good morning Councilmembers. My name is Diane Jackier, Director of External Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Free Public Baths of the City of New York on East 11th Street in Manhattan.

On October 30, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Five people spoke in favor, including New York City Council Member Rosie Mendez, representatives of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, City Lore and the Municipal Art Society of New York. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission also received letters and emails from New York City Council Member Tony Avella and several New York City residents in support of designation. On March 18, 2008, the Commission designated the Free Public Baths a New York City landmark.

A highly intact work of prominent architect Arnold W. Brunner, the Free Public Baths of the City of New York, East 11th Street Bath at 538 East 11th Street is both architecturally and culturally significant. Brunner's use of Indiana limestone on the neo-Italian bath house facade not only contrasted the surrounding dark brick tenements, but also evoked a sense of "cleanliness" fitting for a bathing facility. Tridents and serpents on the cartouches reflect the nautical theme of the building.

The building also represents the histories of the progressive reform movement in America and the immigrant experience on the Lower East Side. Built between 1904 and 1905, the bath (as well as the other thirteen City-operated public baths opened between 1901 and 1914) was the result of hard-fought efforts made by progressive reformers decades earlier. The public bath movement in the United States began in 1840s New York, gaining momentum in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when charitable organizations opened public baths for a small fee on the Lower East Side. Led by Doctor Simon Baruch, "the father of the public bath movement in the United States," they pressured the municipal government to open multiple free public baths throughout the crowded tenement districts in order to provide immigrants with bathing facilities that were non-existent in their own apartments.

The two-story East 11th Street Bath was situated in a predominantly German neighborhood a block north of Tompkins Square Park and was equipped with seven bathtubs and 94 showers, or “rain baths” as they were known. Reflecting Victorian sensibilities, the men’s and women’s arched entrances were placed on opposite ends of the façade that led to entirely separate waiting rooms and shower rooms. Attendance was greatest during summer months; during the 1906 heat wave, “people stood in lines ‘four deep’” and it soon became apparent that the poor used the baths more as a means of cooling off than for hygienic reasons. Gradually, as bathrooms became standard in apartment buildings public baths were less patronized. Closed in 1958, the building was used as a garage and warehouse until 1995 when Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Eddie Adams bought and converted it into a high-end fashion and corporate photograph studio.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY
COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON
THE DESIGNATION OF THE ALLERTON 39TH STREET HOUSE, MANHATTAN
June 2, 2008**

Good morning Councilmembers. My name is Diane Jackier, Director of External Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Allerton 39th Street House in Manhattan.

On December 18, 2007 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Two speakers testified in favor, including representatives of the owner and the Historic Districts Council. There were no speakers in opposition. On March 18, 2008, the Commission designated the Allerton 39th Street House a New York City landmark.

Constructed in 1916-18 by architect Arthur Loomis Harmon (1878-1958), the building at 145 East 39th Street provided the service of a hotel and the intimacy of a private club for young, single men and women. As described in the company's brochure: "the Allerton has quiet, refined, club-like homes that provides socially respectable, economical housing for hard working refined ambitious young men and women." The services were provided without the usual supervision and restrictions imposed by most residential hotels of the early twentieth century. Between 1913 and 1924, six Allerton Houses were built in New York City; this building was the third Allerton Hotel to be built and the first of three that were designed by Harmon.

The building features a granite base and a main façade structured around three bays of windows, constructed primarily of red brick with projecting headers that ascend to a central hipped roof tower. The prominent roof garden, emphasized by three arched openings separated by twin terra-cotta columns, forms the crown of the building, and was a central feature of the hotel's communal facilities. The use of terra-cotta by Atlantic Terra Cotta Company placed strategically on the façade is in keeping with the Northern Italian Renaissance Style of architecture.

In 1956, the Salvation Army converted the Allerton House to the Ten Eyck-Troughton Memorial Residence for Women. It remained in use by the Salvation Army until recently.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY
COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON
THE DESIGNATION OF WEBSTER HALL, MANHATTAN
June 2, 2008**

Good morning Councilmembers. My name is Diane Jackier, Director of External Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of Webster Hall in Manhattan.

On October 30, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Seven people spoke in favor, including City Councilmember Rosie Mendez and representatives of the building's lessee, Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the Historic Districts Council, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, and the New York Landmarks Conservancy. Two representatives of the building's owner opposed designation. In addition, the Commission received a number of communications in support of designation, including letters from City Councilmember Tony Avella, Manhattan Community Board 3, the Friends of Terra Cotta, and City Lore. On March 18, 2008, the Commission designated Webster Hall a New York City landmark.

One of New York City's most historically and culturally significant large nineteenth-century assembly halls, Webster Hall was constructed for Charles Goldstein in 1886-87, with an eastern Annex in 1892, to the designs of architect Charles Rentz, Jr. The Queen Anne style original structure and Renaissance Revival style Annex are clad in red Philadelphia pressed brick with brownstone trim, and effusively ornamented with unglazed red terra cotta that on the original building was likely produced by the Boston Terra Cotta Company or Perth Amboy Terra Cotta Company, the leading manufacturers of the day. The building is terminated by a c. 1911 bracketed pressed metal cornice, and had an elaborate, high domered mansard roof until it was destroyed by fire in 1930. Though little known, the highly prolific Rentz (1855-1906) practiced in New York from around 1880 to his death, and was commissioned largely for flats and tenement buildings.

Throughout its history as one of Greenwich Village/East Village's leading public rental halls and social centers, Webster Hall has been the venue for countless balls, dances, receptions, lectures, meetings, conventions, political and union rallies, military functions, concerts, performances, festivities, and sporting and fundraising events, particularly for the working-class and immigrant populations of the Lower East Side. In the 1910s and 20s, it became famous for its masquerade balls, following the success

of a 1913 fundraiser for the socialist magazine *The Masses*, first attracting the Village's bohemian population, which nicknamed it the "Devil's Playhouse." Among the many notables who attended events here at this time were artists Charles Demuth, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray, as well as writers Djuna Barnes and F. Scott Fitzgerald. A favorite venue for progressive, leftist, and union political organizations, the hall was attended by such luminaries as Samuel Gompers, Margaret Sanger, Emma Goldman, and Dorothy Day, and was the site of the formation of the Progressive Labor Party in 1887, and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in 1914.

From 1953 to 1968, RCA Victor Records operated a notable sound recording studio here, which was famed for its acoustics. Pop vocal, jazz, Latin, folk, and gospel phonograph albums were recorded here by such disparate musical icons as Louis Armstrong, Harry Belafonte, Perry Como, Coleman Hawkins, Lena Horne, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Stan Getz, Sergio Franchi, and Joe Williams. The hall was noted as a venue for Broadway cast recordings, which included Julie Andrews in *The Boy Friend*, Mary Martin in *Peter Pan*, Barbara Cook in *Show Boat*, Ethel Merman in *Annie Get Your Gun*, Carol Channing in *Hello, Dolly!*, and Liza Minnelli in *Flora, the Red Menace*, as well as those of classical artists such as Arthur Rubinstein, Marian Anderson, and Beverly Sills in *Giulio Cesare*. In the 1970s-80s, the building housed Casa Galicia, a meeting and event space, and the rock club The Ritz. It was also the location for a number of movie scenes, such as "Raging Bull" (1980). The name Webster Hall was returned in 1990 with the current club.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.

TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF CONGREGATION BETH HAMEDRASH, MANHATTAN

June 2, 2008

Good morning Councilmembers. My name is Diane Jackier, Director of External Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of Congregation Beth Hamedrash in Manhattan.

On October 30, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Six people spoke in favor, including Councilmember Rosie Mendez and representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society, the Landmarks Conservancy, City Lore and the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. The Commission also received many letters and emails expressing support from Councilmember Tony Avella and others. There were no speakers in opposition. On March 18, 2008, the Commission designated Congregation Beth Hamedrash a New York City landmark.

This Classical Revival style synagogue building is a fine and rare surviving example of the numerous small synagogues that were constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. During this period, hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants came to the United States to escape persecution and to achieve a better life, creating in New York the second largest Jewish community in the world. The newcomers developed vital community and religious organizations for support, especially synagogues, and they were often organized by people who came from the same place. Many small congregations met in rented rooms or used existing church buildings; only the more established and wealthy groups could build their own buildings.

This synagogue was constructed by a Hungarian congregation, the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Anshe Ungarn, or the Great House of Study of the People of Hungary. Formed in 1883, they had outgrown several previous sites before constructing this building. It was designed by the New York architectural firm of Gross & Kleinberger in 1908 and is a two-story dressed stone structure designed in the then-popular classical revival style. The architects used the common synagogue arrangement of three symmetrical bays across the front, but created a highly refined, sophisticated design using applied engaged pilasters and a denticulated pediment and cornices. Over the years, the community on the Lower East Side changed, with many people moving away from the neighborhood, and most of the small synagogues were converted to other uses or demolished. This congregation held on to this building until

1975 and it was converted to residential use in 1985. It is an elegant reminder of the vibrant Jewish community that once filled the streets of New York's Lower East Side.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY
COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON
THE DESIGNATION OF THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY, ELIZABETH HOME FOR
GIRLS, MANHATTAN
June 2, 2008**

Good morning Councilmembers. My name is Diane Jackier, Director of External Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Children's Aid Society, Elizabeth Home for Girls in Manhattan.

On October 30, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Six people spoke in favor, including Councilmember Rosie Mendez, and representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society, the Landmarks Conservancy, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and City Lore. The Commission also received letters of support from Councilmember Tony Avella and many others. There were no speakers in opposition. On March 18, 2008, the Commission designated the Children's Aid Society, Elizabeth Home for Girls a New York City landmark.

The Elizabeth Home for Girls, on Manhattan's Lower East Side, was constructed in 1891-2 as a refuge for homeless girls by the Children's Aid Society. Designed by renowned architect Calvert Vaux in a picturesque, High Victorian Gothic style in brick and sandstone with a Dutch-influenced stepped gable, this building was one of approximately twelve that the architect created for this organization in the 1880s and 90s. It was the only lodging house designed for girls and one of only a few surviving Children's Aid Society buildings.

The Society was founded by Charles Loring Brace in 1853 to help New York's poorest children improve their lives through education and the advantages of "home-like" living quarters. Brace believed that it was necessary to remove poor children from the bad influences of their environment, where they often had no one to care for them and no opportunities for education, in order to improve their lives and alleviate the crushing poverty of the city. He was able to enlist many wealthy supporters and established a strong organization that continues to exist for the benefit of children and their families today.

The Children's Aid Society ran the Elizabeth Home in this building until 1930 when it was sold to Benjamin Lust, a practitioner of a natural "water cure" for illnesses, who coined the term naturopathy. In 1946, the building was purchased by the Florence Crittendon League and used again as a residence for

girls without other places to live, called Barrett House. In 1984, the building changed ownership again and was converted to co-op apartments.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY
COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON
THE DESIGNATION OF THE FISKE TERRACE-MIDWOOD PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT,
BROOKLYN
June 2, 2008**

Good morning Councilmembers. My name is Diane Jackier, Director of External Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic District in Manhattan.

On October 16, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Fifty-four people spoke in favor, including Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, New York City Councilmember Dr. Mathieu Eugene, New York State Assemblymember James F. Brennan, and representatives of the Fiske Terrace Association, the Flatbush Development Corporation, the Historic Districts Council, the Midwood Park Homeowners Association, the Municipal Arts Society, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Society for the Architecture of the City. Two people spoke in opposition to the proposed designation. The Commission also received several letters and emails in support of the proposal. On March 18, 2008, the Commission designated Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park a New York City historic district.

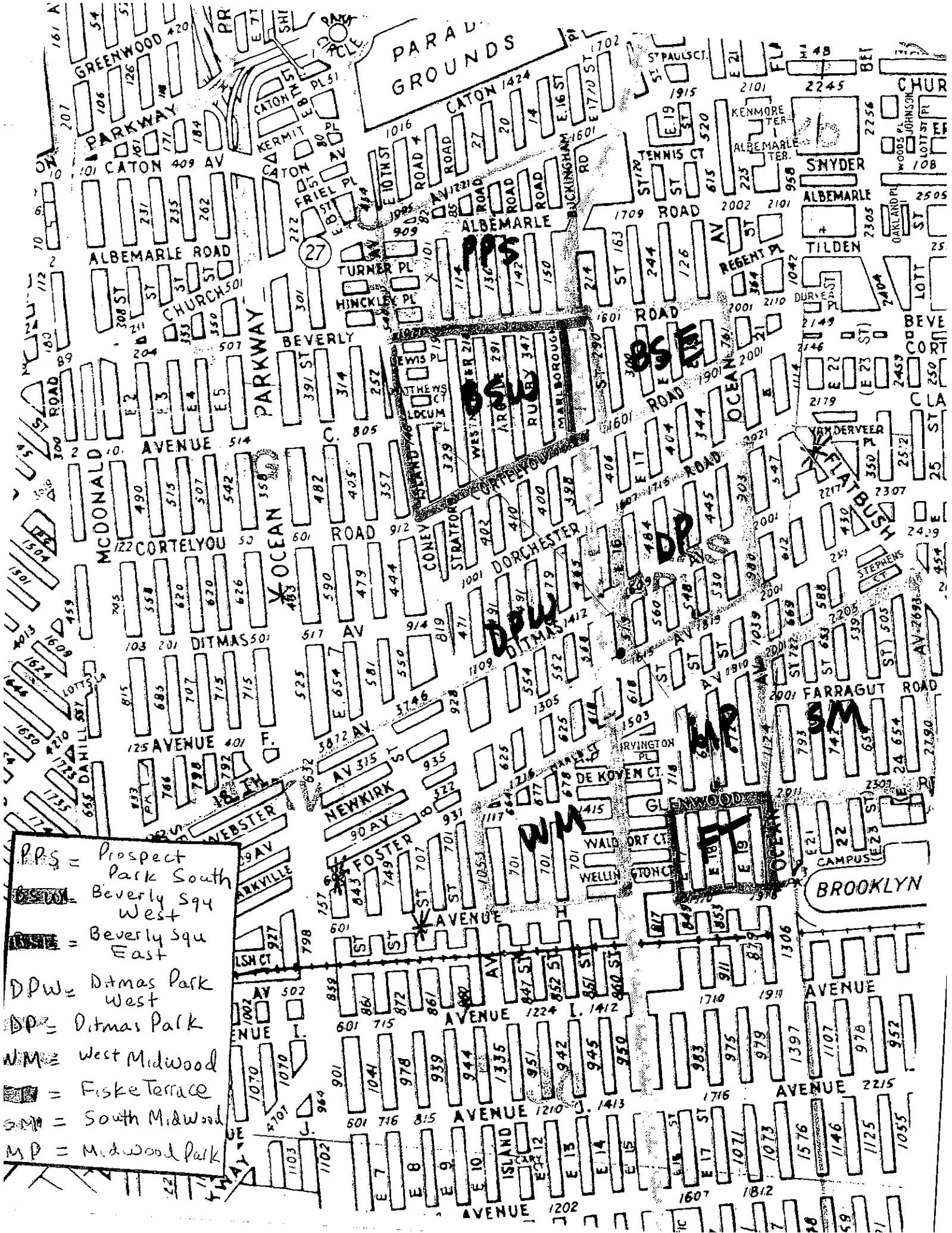
Featuring generous lawns, tree-shaded streets, and landscaped street malls, the Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic District comprises two early-twentieth-century suburbs distinguished by their large, freestanding houses constructed in the popular styles of the time and exhibiting an array of eclectic ornament. Bounded on the north and south by Foster Avenue and Avenue H, and extending from the Brighton subway line on the west to East 19th Street on the east, this district of approximately 250 houses is largely the work of two locally prominent builders and developers, who constructed most of its houses in the twentieth century's first decade. The primary developer of Fiske Terrace, which lies generally south of Glenwood Road, was the T.B. Ackerson Company. Recognized for its efficiency, Ackerson boasted of transforming Fiske Terrace "from woods into city in eighteen months." About three-quarters of the houses in the Midwood Park portion of the district, generally north of Glenwood Road, were constructed by the John R. Corbin Company, which was an innovator in applying industrial-production techniques to housing construction. Many of Midwood Park's houses are standard but attractively designed Corbin models that were "planned and practically made" in Corbin's factory, and shipped to Midwood Park for onsite assembly.




Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park is located in Brooklyn's Flatbush neighborhood, which developed over the last half of the nineteenth century from an agricultural village into one of Greater New York's major suburban areas. Fueling Flatbush's transformation were transportation improvements, including the 1878 opening of the Brooklyn, Flatbush & Coney Island Railroad—the forerunner of today's Brighton subway line—and the 1890s opening of the Ocean Avenue trolley line, both of which served Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park. Flatbush's era of suburban development came to a close by the 1920s, when apartment houses began to replace its freestanding residences.

Most of the houses in the Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic District are characteristic of suburban residences erected by builders, or from catalogs or plan-books, across the country between 1890 and 1930. These “builder houses” were often constructed in one of three forms: the box-like foursquare, crowned by a hipped or pyramidal roof; the temple-house, featuring a prominent front-facing gable; and the bungalow, with its low profile, deep porch with thick tapered columns, and broadly overhanging eaves. All three forms are strongly represented in Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park, often exhibiting a whimsical eclecticism, but adhering primarily to the popular architectural styles of the time, particularly the Arts and Crafts, Colonial Revival, and gambrel-roofed Dutch Colonial Revival. The overwhelming majority of houses in Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park were constructed and occupied by 1914.

Today, the Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic District is a quiet oasis in Flatbush. Exhibiting the adaptation of romantic principles to the urban grid, they recall Flatbush's suburban blossoming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. More than a century after the construction of their first residences, the two neighborhoods of the Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic District remain distinguished by their many large and well-maintained freestanding houses with large porches set behind generous lawns, and are a showcase for the work of the innovative John R. Corbin and Ackerson companies, and for the suburban architecture of their era.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.



- PPS = Prospect Park South
-  = Beverly Squ West
-  = Beverly Squ East
- DPW = Ditmas Park West
- DP = Ditmas Park
- WM = West Midwood
-  = Fiske Terrace
- SM = South Midwood
- MP = Midwood Park



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Mary Beth Betts
Director of Research
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December 11, 2001

Mr. Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director
Historic Districts Council
232 E. 11th Street
New York, NY 10003

Re: Midwood Park, Fiske Terrace and Avenue H Stop on the Brighton Line, Brooklyn

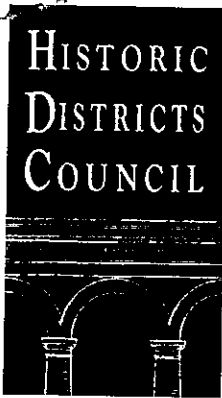
Dear Mr. Bankoff: *Simeon*

Thank you for your letter of support for Midwood Park, and Fiske Terrace Brooklyn. A senior staff committee of the Commission has reviewed the information you recently submitted. The property referenced above will be presented for further discussion to the Commission's Designation Committee, which will determine whether to recommend calendaring a designation hearing for this property. Staff will also review the material on the Avenue H Stop on the Brighton Line. We will keep you informed about the status of this matter.

We appreciate your interest in historic preservation and in work of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Beth Betts
Director of Research



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Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director

November 19, 2001

Hon. Sherida E. Paulsen, Chairman
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
One Centre Street, 9th floor, North
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Paulsen:

The Historic Districts Council wishes to express its strong support for the designation of Midwood Park, Brooklyn, as a New York City-designated historic district. HDC's New Districts Committee visited the area and found that Midwood Park retains its integrity as an early 20th century suburban-type development to a remarkable degree, with very few unsympathetic alterations. It is unified, coherent and harmonious, with a strong sense of place. We found the quality and human scale of the architecture to be internally consistent within the traditional boundaries proposed by the Midwood Park Homeowners Association, enhanced a great deal by the mature trees that line the streets. While no two houses are identical, and several styles are represented, there is a consistency of materials, size and scale that contribute to the sense of place. The porches throughout add to the peaceful, neighborly character of the area. Some of the porches were enclosed after the houses were built, but it should be noted that this work was generally done during the first two decades of the community's existence, and have some historic interest on their own.

The consistency of the built fabric is attributable to the fact that the vast majority of the houses were constructed by one builder, John R. Corbin, using a system of prefabrication that he developed. HDC thinks that the Landmarks Preservation Commission would find those technological innovations to be an interesting and important feature of Midwood Park that distinguishes it from other similar developments.

HDC also found Fiske Terrace, which is adjacent to Midwood Park, also worthy of consideration by the Landmarks Preservation Commission as an historic district. While similar in history to Midwood Park, the houses of Fiske Terrace are more modest in scale. Nevertheless, there is a real sense of place here that is amplified when the two neighborhoods are considered in tandem.

Not far from Midwood Park and Fiske Terrace is a distinctive subway control house at E. 16th Street and Avenue H – the Avenue H stop on the Brighton line. While this station is not a part of Midwood Park or Fiske Terrace, we feel that it deserves to be considered for designation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission as an individual landmark, related to those two developments as well as the other seven early 20th century neighborhoods in

the immediate area. It is a unique control house that seems to have been designed to suggest the picturesque railroad stations in suburbs outside of New York and in so doing, makes the subtle comparison between the suburbs outside the city and those within.

Midwood Park and Fiske Terrace have retained their sense of place, scale and architectural quality. At the same time, these neighborhoods have great appeal for growing families. So far, these neighborhoods have been spared the excessive enlargements or even demolition of properties so that new, larger houses can be built on the same size lots that has happened elsewhere in Brooklyn and Queens. We urge you to designate them before such development pressures irreversibly compromise Midwood Park and Fiske Terrace.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please let us know if there is any further help we can offer.

Sincerely,

Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director

cc: Bea Lurie
Joel Berson