

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS AND

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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

January 14, 2020
Start: 1:09 p.m.
Recess: 2:01 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway-Committee Rm, 16th fl.

B E F O R E: ADRIENNE E. ADAMS
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
INEZ D. BARRON
PETER A. KOO
I. DANEEK MILLER
MARK TREYGER

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Kate Lemos McHale
Director of Research at the New York City
Landmarks Preservation Commission, LPC

Anthony Fabre
Director of Community and Intergovernmental
Affairs at the New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission, LPC

Peter Bray
Trustee and Historic District Committee Chair of
The Park Slope Civic Council

Simeon Bancroft
Executive Director of the Historic Districts
Council

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Good afternoon, I'm

Council Member Adrienne Adams and welcome to this meeting of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Dispositions. Today we are joined by Council Members Barron, Koo and Lander. We will hold public hearings on five individual landmarks located in Brooklyn community district six and designated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in connection with the administration's proposed Gowanus rezoning. LU 597 is the landmark designation of the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory later known as the American can company located at 361 through 363 3rd Avenue, block 980, part of lot eight. LU 598 is the landmark designation of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company Central Power Station Engine House located at 153 2nd Street, block 967, part of lot one. LU 599 is the landmark designation of the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building located at 172nd Avenue, block 1025, lot 49. LU's 497, 498 and five.. I'm sorry, LU's 597, 598 and 599 are all located in the Council District represented by Council Member Lander. LU 600 is the landmark designation of the Gowanus Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate

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House located at 201 Douglass Street, block 411, lot 14. LU 601 is the landmark designation of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter and Garage Building located at 233 Butler Street, block 405, part of lot 51 including a portion of the sidewalk in front of lot 51. LU 600 and 601 are located in the council district represented by Council Member Levin. We will now have remarks by Council Member Brad Lander.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very much Chair Adams and happy new year, it's wonderful to be here with you and Council Member Barron and Koo, thanks to the Committee staff and to Landmarks Preservation Commission as well. This is really a good day; we are still well ahead of the anticipated certification of the Gowanus rezoning and we are all ready at the City Council on the landmarking of these five really historic sites. Gowanus is a neighborhood rich in history especially industrial history but a wide range of history and we're lucky to have this beautiful industrial built environment and it is critical therefor that we preserve and strengthen and make sure it continues strongly into the future out in front of the Gowanus rezoning process to think

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about how we also achieve inclusive, affordable mixed income housing and other open space and business uses in what is really a great neighborhood and can be a continued mixed use neighborhood and a much more inclusive one than the one we have today that really means working hard to get the balance right and that's why I want to thank the Landmarks Preservation Commission for coming to us ahead of time. I also really want to thank the advocates here, the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition, Park Slope Civic Council, Historic Districts Council have been very strong advocates in pushing hard to make this happen out front. And I also want to note that thinking about how we get both a mixed use and a mixed income Gowanus is a big broad challenge of which historic preservation and landmarking is one element, we know though that it's not enough alone to preserve these beautiful industrial buildings, we also want to preserve some of the uses that are in there which create jobs, blue collar jobs for working people and we're trying very hard in the rezoning to make sure both in these developments that we'll be landmarking but also in some of the new developments that we are really thoughtful about preserving the light

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industrial, arts, artisan, manufacturing and
nonprofit uses that make Gowanus a really compelling
place and as the new community develops there that it
is genuinely an inclusive one. Right now, you know
it's almost exclusively an upper middle income
neighborhood, largely a white one, there's some
public housing nearby that needs to be preserved and
strengthened also through this rezoning and the
neighborhood that results has to be more diverse,
more affordable, more integrated without displacement
and that is the goal we'll be having in the coming
months as the rezoning starts to get to the Council
after certification which we anticipate sometime this
quarter most likely but this is a great place to be
starting because we're preserving history as we start
to move forward to think about the balance for the
future. So, I want to, you know just one more time
that's taken a lot of people to get us here, a lot of
advocacy, a lot of work by the city, a lot of shaping
of the values of the development of the future of
this city on this Council, it's not... it, it hasn't
been easy to get here, it won't be easy to get
further but because of all that work a wide range of
stakeholders have been doing I think we have a chance

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2 to get this right and I really feel very grateful to
3 everybody who has been pushing so hard so far. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much
6 Council Member Lander, thank you for all of your hard
7 work as well in getting us here today, thank you. I
8 now open the public hearings on LU's 597, 598, 599,
9 600 and 601. We're joined today by representatives of
10 LPC; Kate Lemos McHale, hi Kate and Anthony, Anthony
11 Fabre. Okay, before you begin Counsel will swear you
12 in.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: Please raise your right
14 hands and state your names.

15 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Kate Lemos McHale.

16 ANTHONY FABRE: Anthony Fabre.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm to tell
18 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
19 in your testimony before this Subcommittee in
20 response to all Council Member questions?

21 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: I do.

22 ANTHONY FABRE: I do.

23 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: You may begin.

24 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Okay. Good afternoon

25 Chair Adams and Subcommittee members and Council

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Member Lander. I am Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to present these five landmarks designated in the Gowanus area of Brooklyn. On October 29th, 2019 LPC designated the five buildings shown here; the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory, the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company Central Power Station Engine House, the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House, the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building and the ASPCA Brooklyn Office Shelter and Garage as individual landmarks. These designations as the Council Member noted were the result of LPC's Gowanus Initiative which I will describe in the next few slides. They were found meritorious for designation due to their combination of their prominence within the neighborhood, their notable architectural character and integrity and their historic connections to the canal and the industries and organizations that developed around it in the late 19th and early 20th century. Their designation recognizes and celebrates the unique character of the canal and the Gowanus, they have adapted over time and remain the area's most prominent architecturally

distinctive and historically significant buildings.

The agency worked closely with the property owners

and received strong support for these designations.

They were the result of a multiple year effort by LPC

through it's Gowanus Initiative to study the Gowanus

area which has a rich history and has seen tremendous

change over time. The canal's designation as a super

fun site in 2010 and superstorm Sandy in 2012 brought

particular attention to the, the need to remediate

and improve infrastructure in the Gowanus and to

develop a plan for the neighborhood's future. As part

of the administration's multi agency planning process

LPC worked closely with the Department of City

Planning, key stakeholders and community members. LPC

staff participated in the public realm working group

as a part of this process, it met several times in

2017 and 2018 to really understand the needs of the

community to inform the planning process and to

identify preservation opportunities in the

neighborhood in advance of the rezoning. As part of

LPC's Gowanus Initiative staff undertook a

comprehensive and detailed study of the entire

neighborhood including the planned rezoning area but

also the industrial area to the south to identify

2 potential landmarks. We developed a framework to
3 finding the major periods of development of the
4 Gowanus neighborhood to guide and inform evaluation
5 of historic structures that best represent that
6 history. To illustrate this framework and our study
7 I'd like to summarize the development history and
8 then give you a brief presentation on each of the
9 landmarks. The Gowanus canal was preceded by the
10 Gowanus creek shown here in this 1766 map. Prior to a
11 European settlement the area was inhabited by members
12 of the Canarsie Tribe and the area's native American
13 history was tied very strongly to its original
14 ecology. Later the Gowanus area played a key role in
15 the battle of Long Island also called the battle of
16 Brooklyn which was the first major battle of the
17 universe... of the revolutionary war and the largest
18 battle ever waged in North America up to that time.
19 First proposed in the 1840's, the Gowanus canal runs
20 from the Gowanus Bay to its terminus just south of
21 Butler Street and was completed after the Civil War
22 in 1869. Shown here is the outline of the canal in
23 its full extent from 1942 overlaid over in 1839 map
24 of the creek. The man-made canal transformed this
25 natural creek and estuary into one of the country's

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first planned industrial districts. The canal's construction coinciding with tremendous growth in Brooklyn spurred development of a range of industries all really relying on the water borne freight and the area was a major entry and distribution point for building materials. The canal and adjacent businesses were most active in the 1900's... in the early 1900's, in the 1920's vessels moved more than 100 million dollars' worth of goods each year making it one of the world's most productive and valuable waterways, it also became highly polluted. Most canal side businesses were housed in wood framed structures that no longer survive, of buildings that do survive from this period two that particularly stand out are the immense brick engine room of the VRT, the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company and the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory which are shown here both of which depended on canal side locations and are included in this group of landmarks. Following world war II there was a decline in industrial activity in the area and many businesses closed or downsized. Over the past 30 years light industrial and commercial activity has grown in the area and its been... become a hub for creative industries and artists many of whom have

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reactivated former industrial and manufacturing buildings. Okay, so here's our first landmark. The Somers Brothers Tinware Factory located at the intersection of 3rd Street and 3rd Avenue, this distinctive factory was built in 1884 for the largest decorated tinware firm in the country at the time. At the public hearing on September 24th the Commission received support for the proposed designation from 14 people including representatives of the property owner, New York City Council Member Brad Lander, the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition, Historic Districts Council, Society for the Architecture of the City, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Park Slope Civic Council, friends and residents of greater Gowanus, Municipal Art Society and four individuals, no one spoke in opposition and in addition the Commission received 33 written submissions in support of designation. And just so you know and to relieve us of some repetition, the, the same testimony really applies to all of them and so I'm not going to keep repeating it each time. In a time before plastics and aluminum cans, tin plate containers made the consumption of a wide range of products possible. In 1878 Somers Brothers firm began to use a lithographic

2 process to print images on tin plate sheets and
3 custom equipment to cut and shape the sheets into
4 containers. This set Somers Brothers apart as the
5 first known American producers of decorated tinware.
6 Daniel Somers designed the factory and invented many
7 of the machines and processes used within. Much of
8 his factory design was functional typical of late
9 19th century industry, industrial architecture but it
10 was also expressive with a remarkable variety of
11 brick patterns and arrangements that are alive in the
12 facades and a mixture of arch windows characteristic
13 of the American round arch style. In 1901 Somers
14 Brothers was absorbed by the American Can Company
15 which became the largest producer of tin cans in the
16 world and made many innovations including the
17 country's first usable beer cans. The American Can
18 Company sold the building in 1950 and by the 1970's
19 the factory had become a creative note in the
20 Gowanus, today its used by more than 300 artists,
21 performers, designers, fabricators, publishers,
22 nonprofit organizations and an iconic music studio.
23 Known as the old American Can Factory it led the
24 Gowanus neighborhood's transition from industry to a
25 lively mix of arts and manufacturing and remains a

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2 vital contributor to the historic and architectural
3 character of the neighborhood. It remains remarkably
4 intact to its time as a major manufacturing presence
5 in Gowanus and is one of the area's most distinctive
6 buildings. The landmark site is shown here on the
7 right as a lot and part that includes the original
8 1884 structure which is also shown in the historic
9 atlas on the left. The former BRT Central Power
10 Station Engine House is a monumental link to the
11 Gowanus Canal's industrial past and a significant
12 structure in the development of mass transit in New
13 York City. It is located on the east side of the
14 Gowanus Canal near the intersection of 3rd Avenue and
15 2nd Street. At its public hearing on September 24th in
16 addition to the support I previously listed, the
17 Commission also received support from a
18 representative of the owner of the Powerhouse
19 Environmental Arts Foundation. The Central Power
20 Station was built in 1901 to 04 by the Brooklyn Rapid
21 Transit Company. This complex consolidated power
22 generating operations for Brooklyn's various lines at
23 a single site marking the company's emergence as one
24 of the country's largest transit providers and making
25 it an important step toward the creation of an

2 integrated mass transit system. The original site
3 extended from the 1st Street basin to 3rd Street and
4 from 3rd Avenue to the canal where barges delivered
5 coal directly to the power station. At the time of
6 completion, the BRT Power Station consisted of two
7 main blocks shown here, a north section demolished
8 before 1950 which served as the boiler room and the
9 surviving engine house indicated with red arrows. The
10 engine house remained in operation providing electric
11 power to the 4th Avenue subway until 1972. The
12 monumental BRT Central Power Station Engine House is
13 a prominent reminder of the era when the Gowanus
14 Canal was a significant inland waterway and the
15 Gowanus neighborhood was a major industrial center.
16 The three original facades are bold yet restrained
17 gaining much of their impact from the structure's
18 immense size, simple massing and multi-story window
19 openings and incorporating expressive brick details
20 which remain intact. In its current form since the
21 mid-20th century, the building is a significant
22 presence in the Gowanus neighborhood gaining
23 significance on its own and known colloquially as the
24 bat cave. In 2012 the former BRT Central Power
25 Station Engine House was acquired by the Powerhouse

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Environmental Arts Foundation which plans to reuse and rehabilitate the structure and construct an annex on the north side. The site conditions have changed through the 20th century and the landmark site is a lot and part incorporating the land beneath the engine house. The Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company building located at the corner of 13th Street and 2nd Avenue reflects the industrial history of the Gowanus neighborhood and stands out for its simple yet refined design and high level of integrity. At the public hearing held on September 24th this building received the testimony that I've already described supporting designation. The Montauk Paint Manufacturing building was historically located on a super block stretching between 2nd Avenue and the canal. It was built as an investment property in 1908 by the Brooklyn Alcatraz Asphalt Company's president William Kelly. The first tenant of the new factory building was the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company incorporated in 1908 who remained in the building for more than 20 years. The Brooklyn Eagle noted at the time that the borough of Brooklyn was one of the four most paint manufacturing centers in the United States. In the mid-20th century Norge Sailmakers

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2 moved into the building. The Norge Sailmakers Company
3 manufactured yacht and sailboat sails as well as
4 covers for pleasure crafts and showcased the building
5 in their advertisements. The building was designed in
6 a simplified version of the American round arts style
7 by Garabed George Heghinian, excuse me, a civil
8 engineer he utilized sophisticated brick work and
9 established a clear expression of the building's
10 structure to create an elegant design. The
11 distinguished design of this building lends to its
12 prominence within the industrial Gowanus neighborhood
13 and it is remarkably intact. Located at the head at
14 the head of the Gowanus Canal and completed in 1911,
15 the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and
16 Gate House were part of a major infrastructure
17 project intended to clean the increasingly polluted
18 water of the canal. They were designed in a
19 monumental neoclassical style elevating their
20 function and are little changed from their original
21 appearance. At the public hearing on September 24th
22 in addition to the support of testimony I've
23 described the Landmarks Commission also received
24 support for designation from the owner, the New York
25 City Department of Environmental Protection. The

2 original plan to maintain the water quality in the
3 Gowanus Canal relied on the ebb and flow of tides but
4 it was soon determined that this was insufficient for
5 the task as the canal received increasing amounts of
6 industrial waste and run off from sanitary and storm
7 water sewers. The city of Brooklyn purchased the lots
8 at the head of the canal including part of the canal
9 in 1890. In 1904 the Bureau of Sewers for the borough
10 of Brooklyn proposed construction of a 6,280-foot-
11 long tunnel linking the canal to Buttermilk Channel.
12 A nine-foot propeller would move the dirty water from
13 the canal and replace it with cleaner water from the
14 bay. And you can see, I think this drawing is
15 incredible, it's showing the, the length of that
16 tunnel. Okay, next. In 1909 work on the Flushing
17 tunnel had been completed and Arthur L. L. Martin of
18 the Bureau of Sewers submitted applications for
19 construction of the two buildings to house the
20 pumping equipment, they were completed in 1911 and in
21 June of that year the residents of south Brooklyn
22 celebrated the opening of the new works, the promise
23 to improve the canal's condition. Executed in red
24 brick and limestone, the Gowanus Canal Flushing
25 Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House reflect the

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2 monumental classicism favored for civic structures of
3 the time. The pumping station on the right house the
4 tunnel's pumping equipment and northern sluice gate,
5 the smaller gate house shown on the left was built to
6 protect the tunnel's southern sluice gate. The
7 Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel opened... operated until
8 the 1960's when the propeller mechanism broke. DEP
9 reactivated it in 1999 after a five-year renovation
10 which including reversing the flow of water to bring
11 oxygenated water from Buttermilk Channel into the
12 canal. The tunnel was again rehabilitated from 2009
13 to 2014. The image on the right from the New York
14 Times illustrates this renovation and the physical
15 relationship of the tunnel with the pumping station
16 and gate house. The image on the left shows the
17 complex in 2013. The landmark site is outlined in
18 red; it includes the portion of the tax lot on which
19 these two historic buildings are located, it does not
20 include DEP's new service building on Butler Street.
21 And finally, upon it's opening in 1913, this building
22 at 233 Butler Street in Gowanus was hailed as the
23 largest most complete animal shelter in the world. It
24 was originally constructed as the Brooklyn dog and
25 cat shelter of the American Society for the

2 prevention of cruelty to animals and is the finest
3 surviving ASPCA building in New York City. At the
4 public hearing on September 24th the Commission
5 received support along with the other five landmarks
6 and in addition we heard support from a
7 representative of the property owner. Originally
8 constructed in 1913, the building was just a single
9 story in height occupying only the western portion of
10 its lot as shown on the left. Renovations in 1922
11 enlarged it to its current size expanding its shelter
12 capacity and expanding it into the ASPCA's
13 headquarters and ambulance house. The ASPCA building
14 is located across Butler Street from the head of the
15 Gowanus Canal, the historic map on the right shows
16 the site in 1921 just before the shelter building was
17 expanded to its present size. The ASPCA has been
18 headquartered in New York City since its founding by
19 Henry Bergh in 1866 and Bergh is shown on the right
20 coming to the aid of overworked horses in this image.
21 Before its founding animals enjoyed few legal
22 protections, the ASPCA was crucial in revolutionizing
23 American's attitudes towards animals and in
24 establishing New York as a national leader in the
25 humane movement. The elegant neo Romanesque style

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design of the Butler Street façade by the firm of

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Renwick, Aspinwall and Tucker is a testament to the

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organization's civic and social importance. Two large

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arch, arches one of which served as an ambulance

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portal dominate a façade enlivened by molded and

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patterned brick work and limestone trim. Changes on

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the main façade are essentially limited to window

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sash and door replacement. As shown by this group of

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girl scouts assembled in front of the building in the

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1920's the building played an important role in

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educating Brooklynites in the care and humane

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treatment of animals and thousands of Brooklynites

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adopted pets here. The ASPCA was a leader in hiring

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female ambulance drivers including the three working

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here in 1924 who were thought to be more tactful than

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men in dealing with the delicate situations often

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faced by ASPCA staff. Bronze medals were awarded here

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to heroic Brooklyn animals including Micky the Irish

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setter who saved his family from a fire. The sidewalk

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in front of the building retains a granite watering

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trough dating from its opening, dozens of similar

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troughs were installed throughout New York City by

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anti-cruelty advocates to provide horses with

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drinking water and this is one of few that remain in

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2 the city. The trough and the building behind it, the
3 finest, best preserved ASPCA building remaining in
4 New York constitute a unique monument to a time when
5 working animals filled the city streets and to New
6 York's central role in the nationwide anti cruelty
7 movement. The existing tax lot does not correspond
8 with the historic lot and so the landmark site
9 includes the building and the sidewalk in front of it
10 including the watering trough. And with that I
11 conclude and thank you very much, I'm happy to take
12 any questions.

13 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much
14 for your testimony, you know it's, it's days like
15 this and hearings like this that just give me such a
16 warm, fuzzy about the history of this... of this great
17 city just... so just to hear the stories and, and Kate
18 you do them so well, it just really takes me back,
19 you know it takes me to a nice storytelling place,
20 you know and so, so that was a wonderful
21 presentation. In Council Member Lander's remarks, he
22 referenced some of these buildings that are still
23 functional, can you just give us a rundown once again
24 which, which of these... which of these buildings are
25 still functional and hours of operation if any.

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KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Sure, yes... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Yeah... [cross-talk]

KATE LEMOS MCHALE: The... well the American Can Company building is a, a place for artists and artisans to work and so it is functional, you know through the day and into the night. The BRT Power... Engine House is in the process of being renovated for also a mixed use of artist, artistic fabrication and other uses and so that will really be the use there, its been vacant for many, many years and so this new use will really reinvigorate that building. The Department of Environmental Protection uses the Pump House still, its, its... it is still part of the canal flushing system, it's not open to the public to visit but it is an active building.. [cross-talk]

ANTHONY FABRE: And we can get the Chair in she wants to... [cross-talk]

KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Yeah, yeah... [cross-talk]

ANTHONY FABRE: If she wants to... it's a great tour I have to say, that's one of my favorite Gowanus sites.

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KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Yeah, we'll have to

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do that and then the ASPCA building is currently in

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use, it has a, a coffee house, a café and it has kind

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of a nightclub so that's active during the day and

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the evening and then the Montauk Paint Factory

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building is owned by an artist and he uses it as a

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studio.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Pretty fascinating

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stuff and I, I just might take you up on that offer

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for the tour, it sounds amazing. I'd, I'd also like

12

to just announce we have been joined by Council

13

Members Miller and Treyger and Council Members do you

14

have any questions for the panel? Council Member

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Lander?

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Chair

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and I'll, I'll try not to go on and on forever as

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much as I... you know I could. So, just one thing I

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think its worth... you know I, I... on my first term in

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the Council I sat on this Committee and chaired this

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Subcommittee and really enjoyed it but I'm not here

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as frequently and I know one thing that is somewhat

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unique here is, you know having this set of five

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industrial sites this is, you know not the typical

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landmarks package that comes, usually its wonderful

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residential buildings and I just wonder, you know is this a... obviously this was in part done because we're looking at, you know a broader plan and changes in Gowanus but is this part of some broader efforts to preserve the industrial history of the city and how does this fit in with, you know the LPC's thinking on those issues?

KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Thank you, well it is part of our efforts to be involved in neighborhoods undergoing change and so I think the, the, the Gowanus Initiative that we took a part of along with the, the broader initiative was very important in terms of identifying potential landmarks and in particular of this industrial character to really preserve that historic character here as the neighborhood undergoes change. We do look throughout the city at, at various neighborhoods and we do want to represent, you know all of the important eras of development, types of development, types of architecture and so in part its also part of that broader initiative that we are, you know always trying to achieve, you know the best representation of the city's historic buildings.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Great and then I

want to just talk about two things so first I want to say one more time now that you're, you know in the.. in the witness chair, thank you, a lot of work has gone in being responsive to the community and doing a lot of work on each of these and especially moving to a place where the building owners were supportive so the whole community really is out... supportively here and no tool that I'm aware of other than landmarking could preserve these buildings amidst change so that is really significant. At the same time there's two other things I think we hoped to do in preserving the historic and mixed use character of the neighborhood that are less directly in the tool kit of the LPC but on which I know we're working together so I just kind of in a certain way want to let my colleagues know about them and the public know about them. As I mentioned and the Chair affirmed part of our goal here is not only to preserve the structures but see their uses transformed actually not far away at 2nd Avenue and 9th Street we have some historic buildings which are not being designated but are old nice buildings but which were about two years ago all of the artists that were in them were evicted and the

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2 landlord is bringing in retail and office and the
3 structures will be preserved but the mixed use
4 character, the more blue collar jobs, the history,
5 the character of the neighborhood less so. So, we are
6 working together in all of these sites in different
7 ways to achieve that preservation, some are easy, the
8 Flushing Tunnel is going to continue to be a critical
9 piece of infrastructure in the... in the city. The one
10 that I think bears a little conversation is the one
11 in the upper left of these pictures, the American Can
12 Factory, the old tin, tin can factory as you... as you
13 talked about where this designation will preserve the
14 buildings but those 300 small artists and artisans
15 and light manufacturers obviously will not be
16 preserved in there as a result of the building
17 preservation and so a, a project is underway or an
18 effort is underway including the LPC, including City
19 Planning, including the building owner to think about
20 an approach to the redevelopment and adapted reuse of
21 that property that provides a good incentive to the
22 owner to preserve that mix of uses and businesses
23 paired with a development plan that was shown to the
24 community and that there is also maybe not as
25 unanimous support as for the landmarking but pretty

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2 broad support for something that would allow on the
3 back part of this site some residential development
4 with affordable housing, MIH and the preservation not
5 only of those beautiful historic structures but of
6 the types of light manufacturing, arts and artisan,
7 businesses that characterize them. So, you know I, I
8 appreciate LPC's involvement in that and I just... on
9 this issue of trying to figure out how to use both
10 the tools of landmarking but also thinking about
11 preservation of uses I wonder if that's... you know if
12 this is a model, if you have other thoughts that are
13 worth sharing I, I really appreciate the landmarking
14 tool but obviously we went to get the balance as best
15 we can.

16 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Yeah, I mean as, as
17 we know designation of buildings doesn't impact the
18 use and so that's not something that's under our
19 purview but in the case where there's this, you know
20 multiagency, multifaceted effort I think that was
21 something that was considered throughout this is
22 really areas that have this industrial character and
23 have this mix of uses and how can that continue and
24 so I think to the degree that we can designate, you
25 know meritorious landmarks, we're really proud of

2 this collection and I think preserving overall the
3 character and really trying to find ways to promote
4 the adaptive reuses is an important part.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you and
6 then my last question similarly is about extending
7 how we think about what we preserve and how we tell
8 those stories, these are wonderful buildings from
9 this industrial history part of the neighborhood,
10 such a critical part and the best part built into the
11 built environment but as your story said at the
12 beginning, you know there's Lenape native American
13 history for which we don't have structures, there's
14 revolutionary war history for which we don't have
15 structures and then there was actually just an
16 exhibit in Gowanus about redlining and issues of kind
17 of historic urban renewal and discrimination and kind
18 of the racist and segregationist paths of our history
19 which also played out in, in Gowanus that's not
20 something we want to preserve in the built
21 environment but it's an important part of the story
22 to tell so per City Planning's draft Gowanus plan and
23 our work together we've been working on the
24 possibility of doing in addition to these building
25 preservations some kind of historic trail or set of

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2 markers so that as we're moving forward in the
3 neighborhood we can not only tell the stories of the
4 Exton buildings but also that broader sense of
5 history and try to learn its lessons and bring its
6 positive values forward and also learn from its
7 mistakes. So, you've said this to me privately but
8 I'll just ask you on the record even though that's
9 not again a tool of the LPC as we move forward and
10 try to figure that out in the rezoning can we count
11 on working together with you to knit the LPC tools
12 together with broader ways of preserving and telling
13 the stories of Gowanus history and connecting people
14 to them?

15 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Yeah, I mean we do
16 try to do a lot of work to promote the understanding
17 of an area's history and the buildings that represent
18 it and so I think what we've pulled together in terms
19 of... and what, you know we wanted to include because
20 we thought was important this overall history of the
21 Gowanus and these eras that formed the framework of
22 its development history but are not as you know
23 represented by existing structures, its still part of
24 that historic context that creates what the place is
25 today and so finding ways to, you know bring that

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2 into the, the way that someone can experience the
3 neighborhood today especially as it changes is great
4 and we... I hope you've all seen we recently put out a
5 story map that talked about New York City's
6 abolitionists here... history and, and our... and
7 activity related to the underground railroad as
8 represented and landmarks where this history is
9 documented and so this is the type of educational
10 tool that we really like to do and so I, I think that
11 would be great.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Great, thank you
13 very much, thank you Madame Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much
15 Council Member Lander, thank you very much for your
16 testimony as always and bringing us this great
17 history today, thank you for your testimony... [cross-
18 talk]

19 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Thank you, you're
20 welcome... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you. Okay, we
22 do have another panel coming up. We're going to call
23 up Peter Bray, Park Slope Civic Council and we will
24 call our friend Simeon Bancroft as well, Historic
25 Districts Council. You may begin.

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PETER BRAY: I'm Peter Bray and I

represent the Park Slope Civic Council as the Chair of its Historic District Committee. I'm here today to urge the City Council to ratify the five Gowanus buildings designated on October 29th by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The Civic Council has been a forceful advocate throughout the Gowanus rezoning process for the protection of the area's history, diversity and unique industrial character. There is no other place quite like Gowanus in New York City. To ensure that these concerns were heard the Civic Council helped to found the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition and I am here today also speaking on its behalf. I do not intend to address each of the five buildings, I think that the LPC has made a clear case for their significance, but I do want to say that they unquestionably deserve to be landmarks. In addition to their architectural character they represent significant aspects of Gowanus's history whether powering the transportation modes of the day or using the Gowanus Canal to produce and ship goods. The Gowanus Pumping Station buildings continue to be vital to the safe operation of the canal. It is important to note that the owners of the four private

buildings and as we heard today the city's

environmental... Department of Environmental Protection

have also testified in favor of their designation.

While we appreciate the LPC's efforts to protect

these buildings I ask that the Subcommittee view this

action only as a starting point and not the end of

the Gowanus landmarking process. The LPC informed the

Coalition in writing that it will continue to assess

several other buildings. The Coalition submitted to

the LPC a list... a list of 18 priority buildings. It

is our concern that once these five buildings are

approved the LPC will not return to address the other

buildings that also contributed significantly to

Gowanus's role in the development of Brooklyn. so,

yes, please endorse the designation of these five

deserving buildings but please also use your

influence in the public interest to press the LPC to

do more in Gowanus, it's work in Gowanus is not done.

The completion of the area's rezoning will inevitably

eradicate its remaining character with a wave of

development so further action in protecting its

architectural and historical character is imperative.

I want to thank the Subcommittee for hearing my

comments and I also want to thank Council Member

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Lander who I know is committed to extending the
landmarking process and, and, and pushing to get more
buildings protected in that area. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you for being
here today, thank you for your testimony.

SIMEON BANCROFT: Good afternoon Council
Members, Simeon Bancroft, Executive Director of the
Historic Districts Council, happy 2020, happy new
decade. HDC is the advocate for New York City's
designated historic districts. We've been working in
Gowanus since 2011 when we featured it as one of our
first initial... the first round of our six to
celebrate neighborhoods. This year's... one of this
year's six to celebrate neighborhoods by the way is
the center Slope so that's... we're going to be working
with Peter again, it's in your district Council
Member Lander. At the time we work closely with the
community group, the friends and residents of greater
Gowanus, we had formed in response to immense real
estate pressure resulting in the erosion of their
neighborhood character through demolitions of
significant historic buildings, gentrification and
tenant and resident displacement as well as
environmental concerns as a result of our

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2 collaboration, a historic resources survey was
3 completed and Gowanus was determined eligible for the
4 national register of historic places with the New
5 York State historic preservation office's full
6 support in 2013. Throughout 2014, 2015 we
7 participated in Council Member Brad Lander's bridging
8 Gowanus project, submitted a statement that called
9 for historic preservation to be a part of any future
10 comprehensive neighborhood plan which it is, we're
11 pleased to see. In fact, the final bridging Gowanus
12 report references our Gowanus guidebook which I
13 should have brought to... should have thought to bring
14 with me but I forgot. The guidebook by the way was
15 never meant to be a comprehensive list of historic
16 resources in the area just a limited inventory that
17 we can publish on 16 pages but even then, we've lost
18 many significant areas since the census 2012
19 publication. When the city of New York announced the
20 Gowanus rezoning in September 2016 we called on LPC
21 to designate historic districts and or landmarks
22 prior to the rezoning, we participated in the public
23 realm working group, helped found like the Park Slope
24 city council, the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition, it
25 seems its success has many parents and we, we, we've

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2 identified several buildings worthy of preservation
3 five of which Landmarks has committed to preserving
4 and we have before us today. so, I'd like to really
5 thank Council Member Lander for listening to our
6 pleas to get out in front of the rezoning for this
7 and to the Landmarks Commission for also listening to
8 our concern that good planning says... practices say
9 that we should figure out what's there first and
10 preserve that before we start talking about how its
11 all going to change. So, this is really a terrific
12 example of that happening and we are really pleased
13 to be part of it and pleased to have such strong
14 partners. I'm not going to repeat what Kate did so
15 wonderfully about these buildings, its, it's such a
16 pleasure to talk about sewer, power and building
17 materials in, instead of just, you know fancy
18 buildings and, you know things like the Frick and
19 stuff like that. I would like to mention that of
20 these buildings I believe at least four of them are
21 going to be having new development right cheek by
22 jowl next to them so this, this really is a case
23 where landmarking is not going to stop development of
24 the area. We had some concerns with some of them
25 which I won't revisit in this joyous occasion about

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public design and, and, and architectural design of
what's being planned. We know that the BRT that is a
longstanding issue, we, we had concerns about the can
factory, we are in favor of additional development to
help continue the can factory's very important role
of the neighborhood but we felt that it should be a...
there should be some level of design and I can go on
at length about the history of tin plate
manufacturing in New York but I won't. again I, I, I
only echo what Peter was saying about this is the
beginning, this is a great start for Gowanus and
preservation, I'd also like to hook into and dovetail
with what Council Member Lander was talking about
using all the tools possible, you know signage is
great, naming is great, plaques are terrific best of
all as a combination that both uses urban design
tools with place making, with actual preservation for
historic properties. So, I, I think that we have a
chance to rescue and preserve the character of
Gowanus, Gowanus is radically changing whether or not
it rezones or not so you, you see it changing, I live
not that far away from the area and over the last 15
years it has remarkably changed in some good ways and
in some unfortunate ways so... and it's going to

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2 continue changing. I think that with this rezoning we
3 have a real opportunity to do the best we can for the
4 city so thank you very much and we urge you to
5 support these.

6 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much
7 for your testimony, we really appreciate it and we
8 certainly appreciate your input on, on this... on this
9 history that we've heard today so thank you for being
10 here today.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Madame Chair can
12 I ask one quick question?

13 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Yes, sir.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you. First
15 I want to thank you for all the advocacy, all the
16 work, for this testimony and for reminding us, you
17 know it's worth taking a moment to remember what's
18 been lost, it is a day of celebration but I am
19 thinking today about the Kentile Floor sign which was
20 such a loss, I mean its sitting in a warehouse maybe
21 it'll go up again someday but it came down and you
22 know the loss of the coal pockets and even like at
23 2nd Avenue and 9th Street where building is staying
24 the loss of the artists from that building so it's
25 worth, you know remembering this is something real

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2 that is lost when we don't... we aren't able to get out
3 in front. I know you both spoke to some additional
4 buildings and I certainly as you know am, am strongly
5 supportive of continuing to go further with more
6 designations, you may not want to name a few of them
7 since it's a list and we don't necessarily want to
8 but if you kind of give my colleagues just a little
9 flavor of some of the other kinds of structures that
10 you're hoping to preserve then that'll help us, you
11 know wet the appetites to do even a little more as,
12 as the rezoning... as the rezoning continues... [cross-
13 talk]

14 [off mic dialogue]

15 PETER BRAY: I didn't bring the list with
16 me but included in our list were some small historic
17 districts so a collection of, of you know a
18 relatively small number of buildings so you know one
19 of the buildings, the Gowanus Pumping Station and the
20 guest house was actually part of what we called the
21 head of the canal historic district and it took into
22 account... and, and of course I should add that the
23 ASPCA building would have also been part of that
24 small historic district but there are several other
25 buildings adjacent to those structures. One of them

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is the... I want to say the R H Dun building.. [cross-talk]

SIMEON BANCROFT: Oh yeah, the R H...
[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: That's right...
[cross-talk]

SIMEON BANCROFT: R H... the R H Dun and
Company building.

PETER BRAY: Okay, so this is a precursor
of the Dun and Bradstreet Company and it's a... it's an
industrial building with, you know a reinforced
concrete structure with I believe terra cotta tile
work on it so in addition to its industrial character
its really... was a starting point of a major company
that's, you know continues today to play a role in
the American economy. There were if I remember
correctly a couple of other small historic districts
and I think one of the things that's missing today in
kind of preserving what makes Gowanus special is that
it was a combination of industrial activity and the
people who worked in these factories and lived a
block or two away so... you know at the kind of
junction between Gowanus and Carroll Gardens are some
modest blocks of row houses... [cross-talk]

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SIMEON BANCROFT: Is it Presidents

Street?

PETER BRAY: She's on President Street...

[cross-talk]

SIMEON BANCROFT: Right... [cross-talk]

PETER BRAY: I believe.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Yeah.

PETER BRAY: So, the... these are... you know

I think the complete story behind Gowanus is that it was a part of New York City where... you know today we talk about live, work areas, this was perhaps the first live, work community... you know I'm, I'm not a historian it was certainly a prominent example of a live, work community where people lived there and, and could walk to work and the housing stock reflects that character, these are homes of, of a, a... you know a, a working class community that we don't I think give enough consideration to when we talk about creating historic districts in New York City.

SIMEON BANCROFT: I agree entirely with

what Peter said and also I took a moment and was reminding myself there are the Ralston buildings which Council Member Lander was talking about which really can't be developed much higher than they can

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be right now and it's just to question the very

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simple but clean buildings that... making sure that you

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don't mess up the, the entrances and the, the windows

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will make all the difference in the world. There are

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the buildings on Presidents Street that Peter was

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referring to, right across from them is the old

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Planet Mills Condominium which is a conversion, a

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very successful co-op conversion of an old industrial

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site, there is the... there's the brewing company on

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4th... [cross-talk]

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PETER BRAY: There's the icehouse...

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[cross-talk]

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SIMEON BANCROFT: The icehouse and the

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brewery... [cross-talk]

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PETER BRAY: Bond Street I believe...

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SIMEON BANCROFT: Bond Street, right,

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Bond Street which is a series of complexes of

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brewing, the... as, as the Council might know New York

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used to make a lot of beer and it doesn't anymore, I

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mean we're, we're getting back to it but there are

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just these wonderful old buildings that used to

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employ hundreds and hundreds of people and are, are

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still there and still completely functional so that's

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another example.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you so much, look forward to continuing to work with you.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Great and thank you for bringing us back in, thank you for this wonderful perspective on the history of one of the finest places in the entire borough of Brooklyn and the city of New York so again thank you for your testimony today.

SIMEON BANCROFT: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Are there any more members of the public who wish to testify on these items? Seeing none I now close todays hearing, and the application will be laid over. I'd like to thank the members of the public, my colleagues and of course Council and Land Use staff for attending today's hearing. 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

January 20, 2020