

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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May 21, 2024
Start: 11:08 a.m.
Recess: 11:43 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - COMMITTEE ROOM, 14TH
FLOOR

B E F O R E: Kamillah Hanks, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Amanda Farías
Oswald Feliz
Christopher Marte
Sandy Nurse
Yusef Salaam

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS
AND DISPOSITIONS

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Kelly Biscuso, Vice President in the Real Estate
Development Group at Phipps Houses

Matthew Washington, Vice President and Chief-of-
Staff for Phipps Houses

Shams Al Khafaji, project manager for Housing
Preservation and Development's Affordable
Neighborhood Cooperative Program

Sherill Henry, Senior Vice President of Real
Estate Development at Congregations for Community
Improvement

Stephen Erdman, Executive Director of
Homeownership and Shared Equity at Housing
Preservation and Development

Margaret Herman, Deputy Director of Research
Department at the Landmarks Preservation
Commission

Steven Thomson, Director of Community and
Intergovernmental Affairs at the Landmarks
Preservation Commission

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS AND
DISPOSITIONS

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1
2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Check one, two, check
3 one, two. This is a prerecorded sound test for the
4 Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and
5 Dispositions. Today's date is May 21, 2024. It's
6 being recorded by Michael Leonardo in the 14th Floor
7 Committee Room.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
9 welcome to today's New York City Council Subcommittee
10 on Landmarks, Public Sitings and Dispositions.

11 At this time, we ask that you silence all
12 cell phones and electronic devices to minimize
13 disruptions throughout the hearing.

14 If you have testimony you wish to submit
15 for the record, you may do so at
16 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is
17 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

18 We thank you for your cooperation.

19 Chair, we are ready to begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: [GAVEL] Good morning
21 and welcome to the meeting of Subcommittee on
22 Landmarks, Public Sightings, and Dispositions. I am
23 Council Member Kamillah Hanks, and I am the Chair of
24 the Subcommittee.
25

1
2 Today, I am joined by my Colleagues,
3 Marte, Nurse, and Salam.

4 Before we begin with today's agenda, I
5 will remind everyone that this meeting is being held
6 in hybrid format.

7 For members of the public who wish to
8 testify remotely, we ask that you first register
9 online, and you may do so now by visiting
10 www.council.nyc.gov/landuse to sign up and sign onto
11 the Zoom and remain signed on until you have
12 testified.

13 For anyone with us today in person
14 wishing to testify, and you've not already done so,
15 please see one of our Sergeants to fill out a speaker
16 card. We will call your name at the appropriate time.

17 For anyone wishing to submit written
18 testimony on the items being heard today, we ask that
19 you please send it via email to
20 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov, including the land
21 use number and the project name in the subject line
22 of your email. Video and audio testimony will not be
23 accepted.

24 I remind the members of the public that
25 this is a government proceeding and decorum shall be

1
2 observed at all times. As such, members of the public
3 shall remain silent unless and until called to
4 testify.

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

8 Further, members of the public may not present audio
9 or video recordings as testimony but may submit the
10 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant for
11 inclusion in the hearing record.

12 With that said, on today's agenda, we
13 have a hearing on Land Use item 80, the Landmarks
14 Preservation Commission's proposed designation of the
15 New York Public Library Tremont Branch in Council
16 Member Feliz's District in the Bronx as a historic
17 landmark, Land Use item 81104-108 West 139th Street
18 ANCP Cluster in Council Member Salaam's District in
19 Harlem, that was a mouthful, and Land Use L2 Article
20 XI tax exemption request for the Sunnyside Barnett in
21 Council Member Won's District in Queens.

22 Now, I will open the hearing for LU
23 number 82, the Real Estate Property Tax Exemption
24 Application pursuant to Article XI in the Private
25 Housing Finance Law to facilitate the development of

1 a mixed-use building consisting of approximately 185
2 affordable units, community space, and on-site
3 surface parking known as Sunnyside Barnett in Queens
4 in Council Member Won's District.

5
6 Appearing with us today, we have Kelly
7 Biscuso, President of Development at Phipps Houses,
8 and Matthew Washington, Vice President and Chief-of-
9 Staff of Phipps Houses.

10 Those who wish to testify once again must
11 register online visiting the Council's website at
12 council.nyc.gov/landuse.

13 Counsel, will you please administer the
14 affirmation? Thank you.

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

18 KELLY BISCUSO: Kelly Biscoe.

19 MATTHEW WASHINGTON: Matthew Washington.

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

24 KELLY BISCUSO: I do.

25 MATTHEW WASHINGTON: So help me God, I do.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. Applicant panelists, please begin.

KELLY BISCUSO: Good morning, Chair Hanks and Members of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and Dispositions. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of 5025 Barnett Housing Development Fund Corporation and its sole member, Phipps Houses, which is New York City's oldest and largest non-profit developer, owner, and manager of affordable housing. My name is Kelly Biscuso. I'm a Vice President in the Real Estate Development Group at Phipps Houses, and with me is my colleague, Matthew Washington, who is also a Vice President and Chief-of-Staff for Phipps Houses. We're here with our partners from New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development and, in accordance with Section 577 of the Private Housing Finance Law, we are seeking approval of an Article XI tax exemption for a new 100 percent affordable housing development located at 5025 Barnett Avenue in Sunnyside, Queens. This project is known as The Barnett.

The Barnett was previously approved by the New York City Council through rezoning in 2021,

1 and it will provide a 185-unit, 100 percent
2 affordable housing development, which will also
3 include 4,665 square feet of community facility
4 space. The development will be financed under HPD's
5 Extremely Low and Low-Income Affordability Program,
6 and it will provide funding for the construction of
7 low-income homes for families with a range of incomes
8 from 30 percent to 80 percent of the area median
9 income. This is an exciting opportunity to bring new
10 affordable housing to New York City, and we are
11 grateful to you for providing us with the opportunity
12 to present this project to you. Thank you once again
13 for your time and your consideration of this
14 proposal, and we're happy to answer any questions you
15 may have.
16

17 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

18 MATTHEW WASHINGTON: He speaks for both of
19 us. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Excellent, excellent.
21 I love that. Thank you.

22 Now, I'd like to recognize any of my
23 Colleagues if anyone has questions or remarks.

24 Seeing none, thank you. The applicant
25 panel is now excused.

2 KELLY BISCUSO: Thank you.

3 MATTHEW WASHINGTON: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Counsel, are there any
5 members of the public who wish to testify on this
6 item?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, there's no members
8 of the public online or in person who wish to
9 testify.

10 If anybody is interested in testifying in
11 person, please sign a card up front.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay, seeing none,
13 with there being no other members of the public who
14 wish to testify regarding LU82 for the Sunnyside-
15 Barnett, the public hearing is now closed.

16 I will now open public hearing for LU
17 number 81, applications brought by HPD for
18 designation of an Urban Development Action Area,
19 approval of an Urban Development Action Project,
20 disposition of City-owned land to a developer
21 selected by HPD as well as a real estate property tax
22 exemption pursuant to Article XI of the Private
23 Housing Finance Law to facilitate development of the
24 affordable housing project known as 104-108 West 39th

1
2 Street ANCP for five clustered sites in Harlem in
3 Council Member Salaam's District.

4 Appearing here today on this proposal is
5 Shams Al Khafaji from HPD, Stephen Erdman from HPD,
6 and Sherill Henry, Senior Vice President of Real
7 Estate Development at Congregations for Community
8 Improvement.

9 Again, those wishing to testify remotely
10 must register online by visiting the Council's
11 website at [council.nyc.gov/land use](http://council.nyc.gov/land-use).

12 Counsel, would you please administer the
13 affirmation?

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

17 SHAMS AL KHAFAJI: Shams Al Khafaji.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

19 SHERILL HENRY: Sherill Henry, Harlem
20 Congregations for Community Improvement.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

22 STEPHEN ERDMAN: Stephen Erdman, HPD.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, and do you
24 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
25 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS AND
DISPOSITIONS

11

2 Subcommittee and in answer to all Council Member
3 questions?

4 SHAMS AL KHAFAJI: I do.

5 SHERILL HENRY: I do.

6 STEPHEN ERDMAN: I do.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. Applicant
8 panelists, please begin.

9 SHAMS AL KHAFAJI: Good morning,
10 everybody. My name is Shams Al Khafaji, and I am a
11 project manager for HPD's Affordable Neighborhood
12 Cooperative Program, or ANCP. First, I'd like to
13 thank the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings
14 and Dispositions for your time today.

15 This morning, I'll be speaking on 104-106
16 West 139th Street Cluster, which is a proposal to
17 rehabilitate four buildings in Harlem under HPD's
18 Affordable Neighborhood Cooperative Program. Move to
19 the next slide.

20 The purpose of this project is to gut-
21 renovate the Tenant Interim Lease, or TIL, buildings
22 to enable the existing residents, of which there are
23 38 in this cluster, to become homeowners. The
24 structure of this project will be a collaboration
25 between a sponsor, Harlem Congregations for Community

1
2 Improvements, of whom we have Sherill Henry this
3 morning, partnering with HPD. The sponsor will manage
4 the building during construction and throughout the
5 conversion process. During construction, the non-
6 profit restoring community's HDFC will own the
7 building to prevent any potential conflicts of
8 interest with the sponsor. Upon conversion, the
9 building will be owned and managed by the residents
10 of the buildings, including the existing residents
11 and new purchasers of the currently vacant
12 residences. The requirements for the buildings to
13 convert to cooperatives are to, one, have 80 percent
14 of existing residents attend at least eight co-op
15 success trainings, which will be provided during the
16 construction period, two, 80 percent of existing
17 residents must also remain current on their rent
18 payments and, lastly, three, 80 percent of existing
19 residents must choose to purchase their units at co-
20 op conversion. Next slide, please.

21 To speak on the affordability of these
22 units, existing residents will pay 250 dollars if
23 they are earning up to 80 percent of the area median
24 income. Residents that earn more than 80 percent of
25 the area median income will pay 2,500 dollars to

1 purchase their converted units. Residents will not
2 obtain any personal mortgages for the purchase of
3 their units. For new purchasers of the currently
4 vacant units, of which there are 35 in this cluster,
5 purchase prices will be set affordable to 80 percent
6 of area median income. Those prices are set so that
7 the purchasers' personal mortgages plus monthly
8 maintenance plus utilities will not exceed roughly
9 one-third of their income to remain affordable. The
10 area median income of a family of three is shown, in
11 2024, is shown on the slides. Next slide, please.

12
13 The TIL rents that residents are
14 currently paying do not produce enough income to
15 maintain the buildings. The monthly cost through ANCP
16 will change through a rent restructuring process at
17 the point of conversion. The expenses required to
18 maintain a building include building insurance, heat
19 and hot water, electric in public places, maintenance
20 staff salaries, water and sewer, accountant/legal,
21 extermination, minor repairs, just to name a few. The
22 shareholders will collectively decide how much they
23 would like to increase maintenance biannually.
24 However, there is a required 2 percent increase per
25 year per the ANCP term sheet. For the co-op to have

1 enough money to cover the prior mentioned expenses,
2 monthly maintenance has been set affordable to
3 families earning 40 percent of AMI. Any residents
4 earning below that amount will receive Section 8
5 vouchers to ensure that they do not pay more than 30
6 percent of their total income on housing. The voucher
7 will subsidize the difference between the residents'
8 share, which is 30 percent, and the 40 percent AMI.
9 It is shown on the slides, the various AMIs for
10 various family sizes. For example, 40 percent AMI for
11 a family of three in 2024 is 55,930 dollars.
12 Households that earn above 40 percent AMI, the
13 initial maintenance is set so that maintenance plus
14 utilities does not exceed roughly one third of their
15 income. There are some estimates below on the slides
16 of what monthly maintenance might look like at
17 conversion, but these are just estimates, and exact
18 costs will be set closer to actual conversion date.
19 So just to summarize, no one will pay more than 30
20 percent of their income. Next slide, please.

21
22 This here is an example of the total
23 monthly payments for a household in ANCP with an
24 income of 15,000 dollars per year. The total
25 maintenance for one bedroom is roughly 1,059 dollars

1 based on 40 percent AMI. The shareholder will only
2 pay 375 dollars, which is 30 percent of their monthly
3 income since they earn less than 40 percent of AMI.
4 Then the voucher will subsidize the rest of the
5 maintenance with 684 dollars. Next slide, please.

7 Typical project costs that are included
8 in the rehabilitation work are introducing new
9 building systems, which include low carbon electrical
10 and heating systems and new water and gas lines.
11 Costs also go to legalizing the unit layouts and
12 bringing the buildings up to Code, introducing new
13 and improved accessibility features, including
14 accessible showers, wheelchair accessibility within
15 units, and most residents in these specific buildings
16 have seen and signed off on their new unit's layouts.
17 Additionally, residents are typically relocated
18 during the construction period, which is
19 approximately 24 to 30 months, which the project
20 budget covers the difference between the current
21 amount they pay, which is the TIL rents as we
22 discussed, and the relocation units, rent, and TIL
23 conversion. The project budget also covers every
24 other cost related to moving like boxes, movers,
25 tape, storage, and in these buildings' case

1 specifically, some tenants are relocated early due to
2 concerns about the safety of the buildings. Lastly,
3 the project also covers co-op success trainings to
4 the residents to help them build their knowledge and
5 ability to become successful homeowners.
6

7 Additionally, the budget provides substantial reserve
8 fund to help the building pay for any emergencies
9 down the road. Next slide, please.

10 The typical financing for co-op project
11 is that the majority of it is paid through a City
12 capital loan, which will be provided in the amount of
13 500 to 700,000 dollars per unit. There will be zero
14 debt payments and zero-dollar interest payments for
15 40 years tied to the Article XI property tax
16 exemption that we are applying for, and the first
17 payment will be due to the City after 40 years only
18 if the co-op chooses to exit affordability. If the
19 co-op chooses to stay under a regulatory agreement,
20 then there will be no loan payments and zero-dollar
21 debt payments due. HPD's loan does not impact the
22 maintenance fee amount because, as discussed earlier,
23 the maintenance fee has been set to cover the
24 building expenses and to add an affordability metric.
25 This project is also receiving funding through New

1
2 York State Grant, AHC, which will not be repaid. The
3 sales proceeds from both occupied units, but
4 primarily the vacant units, will help to provide
5 funds to help finance the project, Article XI tax
6 exemption that we're applying for will reduce and
7 eliminate the property tax cost on the building for
8 at least 40 years, if not longer and, lastly, the
9 subsidized acquisition cost of one dollar per
10 building because the buildings are currently City-
11 owned, and it also brings down the development cost.
12 Next slide, please.

13 In terms of development timeline for this
14 project, the sponsor designation process has already
15 occurred. As just mentioned earlier, Harlem
16 Congregations for Community Improvement has been
17 designated. We are currently in the pre-development
18 phase. We have had continuous tenant engagement as
19 recent as April 25th, so about a month ago. Scope of
20 work has been determined. Budget and financing are
21 currently in the works, and we have 81 percent tenant
22 sign-off on layouts, but we plan to obtain 100
23 percent in the coming weeks, and we also plan to have
24 all tenants relocated by fall of 2024. We are
25 anticipating that construction will take between 24

1 and 30 months. During that period, the deed of the
2 buildings will be transferred from the City to
3 Restoring Communities, which as discussed earlier, it
4 is the temporary owner of the buildings, then the
5 construction loan will close, and the construction
6 will begin as soon as the tenants are relocated.

7 Tenants will attend previously mentioned co-op home
8 ownership trainings then the sponsor will engage an
9 attorney to create an offering plan, which allows us
10 to convert to co-op at the end of construction. Then
11 after construction finishes, we anticipate it'll take
12 about 9 to 12 months to go through the marketing and
13 conversion process so that the tenants will be moved
14 back to the buildings as soon as it's ready.

15 Marketing for the vacant units will begin. The
16 building will convert to co-op once those units are
17 being marketed and have signed purchasers, and the
18 deed will be transferred to the co-op, and then the
19 construction loan will be paid off at that co-op
20 conversion point by permanent financing. Next slide,
21 please.

22
23 Here, I'll pass it off to Sherill Henry
24 of HCCI to speak about their organization and some
25 project specifics.

1
2 SHERILL HENRY: Hi, good morning,
3 everyone.

4 Harlem Congregations for Community
5 Improvement has been involved in the development of
6 rental and affordable housing for 38 years. We have
7 considerable experience in preserving and developing
8 homeownership programs. I would say our main emphasis
9 also has been to provide rentals to the tenants
10 within the Harlem area, particularly the Central
11 Harlem area. I would say that was like approximately
12 90 percent of our construction, both preservation and
13 new construction so we are continuing, as it relates
14 to homeownership, with this 104-108 West 139th Street
15 Cluster project. We have selected the construction
16 lender who is going to be what we call the gap
17 financing entity.

18 SHAMS AL KHAFAJI: We'll move to the next
19 slide for this bit.

20 SHERILL HENRY: Yeah, yeah, okay.
21 Currently there are 75 units, but there will be 73
22 units due to the change in Code requirements at the
23 Department of Buildings. We currently have 38
24 existing households, and 35 will be the first-time
25 buyers. The sales price for the existing residents

1 will be from 250 for those people who are below 50
2 percent AMI or 2,500 dollars for those who exceed the
3 50 percent AMI level. Sale prices for the new
4 residents are affordable to 80 percent AMI. Monthly
5 maintenance fee for all residents set at 40 percent
6 AMI or below. We expect to close on this project mid
7 to late 2024. ECCI is also engaged in a tremendous
8 amount of tenant engagement. We are relocating
9 people. We are answering their questions. Some people
10 are concerned about moving out of their environment,
11 so we try to calm their fears because they will be
12 experiencing new changes. We are working with them to
13 collect income and encouraging them to facilitate the
14 improvements that will be made to their property.
15 Currently, there are 17 studio apartments. Post-
16 rehab, there'll be 17 studio apartments, 13 one-
17 bedroom, 20 two-bedroom units, 16 three-bedrooms, and
18 seven four-bedrooms. Thank you for giving me this
19 opportunity to make this presentation.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much.

22 Just want to let you know, we've been joined by
23 Majority Leader Amanda Farías.

1
2 Thank you so much. I'd like to invite my
3 Colleagues, if anyone has any questions or remarks.
4 Council Member Salaam.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Hi, good morning.
6 I was wondering if you might be able to share with us
7 the breakdown of the actual budget as well.

8 STEPHEN ERDMAN: Yes, so as Shams
9 mentioned on the financing page, that's the summary
10 of the budget that we have. I think the key piece of
11 information is that we're expecting HPD to provide a
12 loan in the amount of 500 to 700,000 dollars per
13 unit. The budget itself is still in development right
14 now. We can certainly provide that to you as those
15 numbers become more finalized. We also will be
16 hosting a meeting with residents when the budget is
17 finalized to present that to them so they can
18 understand how the project is being financed and what
19 types of loans from the City will be part of the
20 project so that is something we certainly can follow
21 up on with you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Okay, I want to
23 perhaps maybe just table this particular project just
24 so that we can have more time to finalize a few
25 things.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you, Council
3 Member.

4 Thank you, this applicant panel is now
5 excused.

6 Counsel, are there any members of the
7 public who wish to testify on this item?

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, we have no one
9 signed up online or in person.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: There being no other
11 members of the public who wish to testify on LU81-
12 104-108 West 139th Street ANCP Cluster, the public
13 hearing is now closed.

14 I will now open the public hearing for
15 LU80, the proposed designation by the Landmarks
16 Preservation Commission of New York Public Library,
17 Tremont Branch in Council Member Feliz's District in
18 the Bronx as a historic landmark.

19 Appearing today is Margaret Herman,
20 Deputy Director of Research Department, Landmarks
21 Preservation Commission.

22 Those wishing to testify remotely must
23 register online by visiting the Council's website at
24 www.council.nyc.landuse.

2 Counsel, will you please administer the
3 affirmation?

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

7 MARGARET HERMAN: Margaret Herman.

8 STEVEN THOMSON: Steven Thomson.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Do you
10 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
11 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
12 Subcommittee and in answer to all Council Member
13 questions?

14 MARGARET HERMAN: I do.

15 STEVEN THOMSON: I do.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: We've been now joined
17 by Council Member Feliz.

18 Thank you, applicant panelists, please
19 begin.

20 MARGARET HERMAN: Good morning, Chair
21 Hanks and Subcommittee Members. My name is Margaret
22 Herman, Deputy Director of the Research Department at
23 the Landmarks Preservation Commission, joined by
24 Steven Thomson, our Director of Community and
25 Intergovernmental Affairs. Thank you for the

1
2 opportunity to present our recent designation of the
3 Tremont Branch of the New York Public Library.

4 This designation was identified in
5 multiple LPC surveys over the years. It was
6 prioritized on our survey of Carnegie Libraries and
7 on our recent comprehensive survey of the Bronx, an
8 area where we have been working to increase landmark
9 designations that reflect the diversity and rich
10 heritage of our city. Next slide, please. Thank you.

11 The Tremont Branch was the sixth library
12 of 67 circulating libraries constructed from steel
13 magnate Andrew Carnegie's donation in 1901, which
14 created the most extensive library system in the
15 country. The Tremont Library was one of 14 Carnegie
16 Libraries designed by the architecture firm of
17 Carrere and Hastings, and it has remained in
18 remarkable condition. The Tremont Branch is the last
19 Carnegie Library to be designated in the Bronx that
20 is intact and still operating within the NYPL system.
21 At its public hearing on January 23, 2024, a
22 representative of the New York Public Library
23 testified in support of the designation as did the
24 Historic Districts Council and the Bronx Borough
25 Historian. The Commission received one additional

1 letter of support from an individual, and no
2 testimony was received in opposition to the
3 designation. Next slide.
4

5 The Tremont Library is located in the
6 East Tremont neighborhood of the Bronx at the corner
7 of East 176th Street and Washington Avenue. Next
8 slide, please.

9 The library was completed in 1905.
10 Carnegie Libraries were typically opened in populated
11 areas on busy streets where the reading rooms were
12 strategically placed close to the sidewalk to draw
13 people in. Community branch libraries like Tremont
14 reflected Carrere and Hastings' stately, classically-
15 inspired aesthetic used to make the libraries easily
16 recognizable to the public. Next slide.

17 Carrere and Hastings, one of the most
18 prominent Beaux-Arts architecture firms in the 20th
19 century, designed the central branch in Manhattan.
20 The firm was also part of the Architects Committee,
21 which set the design standards for the branch library
22 system. Carrere and Hastings designed 14 branch
23 libraries, which fell into three general categories,
24 mid-block libraries like the Muhlenberg Branch in
25 Manhattan, small free-standing libraries like the

1
2 Tottenville Branch on Staten Island, and libraries
3 set on prominent corners like the Hunts Point Branch
4 in the Bronx. Next slide.

5 The Tremont Library is a two-story
6 classical revival corner brick building with a
7 partial third story for the janitor's apartment. The
8 building features a limestone trim with limestone
9 keystones on the first floor in the arched windows, a
10 projecting band course between the first and second
11 floors, limestone enframements of the second-floor
12 windows, a denticulated cornice, and parapet panels.
13 Although designed with five bays, a sixth bay was
14 added between 1915 and 1916 and, due to the
15 extension, what originally was a central entrance is
16 now an asymmetrical one. The building also has a side
17 entrance and a basement entrance on East 176th
18 Street. Next slide.

19 In the early 20th century, Tremont was
20 home to primarily European immigrants. As the century
21 progressed, the population changed from Europeans to
22 primarily Latino and black families. The Tremont
23 Branch held lectures and events to educate the public
24 in a wide variety of subjects. The programs were
25 largely informed by the demographics of Tremont and

1 what the librarians saw as beneficial to the
2 community, which evolved over time. Next slide.

3
4 Librarians employed at the Tremont Branch
5 kept extremely detailed documentation describing the
6 importance of the library, their work with the
7 public, changes to the neighborhood, and advocacy for
8 programming, which give a unique insight into the
9 evolution of Tremont. Over time, Tremont was home to
10 many different ethnicities, which the branch
11 consistently celebrated and uplifted. The Tremont
12 Branch was one of the foremost branch libraries for
13 books on Jewish culture and history in the 1940s, and
14 it was one of eight libraries funded through the
15 South Bronx Library Project to engage the Spanish-
16 speaking community in the 1960s. In the 1980s, it
17 hosted a Black Heritage Committee to highlight
18 African American literature. Next slide.

19 The exterior of the Tremont Branch
20 remains remarkably intact, including its stone and
21 ironwork. These images show the library's popularity,
22 both on its opening day in 1905, when the public
23 lined up to enter the new space, and following an
24 interior renovation in the 1950s, when the public
25 rushed in to use the space once again. In 2009, the

1
2 Tremont Branch underwent additional interior
3 renovations to make it more accessible. Part of
4 Carnegie's conditions for his donation tasked the New
5 York Public Library with the stewardship of the
6 branch libraries, a task evidently carried out in the
7 Tremont Branch. Next slide.

8 The Tremont Branch is a distinguished
9 example of a highly intact, well-preserved branch
10 library constructed from the donation of Andrew
11 Carnegie that created the most extensive library
12 system in the United States. Along with its stately
13 architecture by the firm of Carrere and Hastings is a
14 community space that evolved in step with the Tremont
15 neighborhood. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much. I
17 would like to now recognize any of my Colleagues.
18 Anyone have questions or remarks?

19 Council Member Feliz.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you so much,
21 Chair. Good morning, everyone. I'm Council Member
22 Oswald Feliz, proudly represent District 15, wherein
23 the library is located. I'm proud to support the
24 historic landmark designation of this New York Public
25 Library located in Tremont. The building is an

1
2 excellent example of an early Carnegie library. I
3 would also like to acknowledge the work being done
4 inside the library. Libraries play an important role
5 in their communities. The Tremont Branch has been and
6 continues to be a community space and a classroom.
7 The library has welcomed generations of immigrants,
8 as you mentioned, and offered support in many
9 different ways, including as they learn many
10 different languages, including English. I hope my
11 Colleagues will join me in supporting this
12 designation. Thank you.

13 And a few questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Go ahead.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you. Two
16 questions. What are the consequences of not
17 landmarking this building?

18 MARGARET HERMAN: That's a good question.
19 This is a designation so I don't know if I can speak
20 to that exactly. The reasons for designating would be
21 to recognize significance, and I think we've worked
22 with the New York Public Library throughout this
23 process. The LPC has previously designated 21 other
24 Carnegie libraries, and I think it's clear that the
25 Library values these historic spaces. I think it's a

1 way to really kind of represent the best of these
2 historic community spaces.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay. Would the
5 landmark status we're considering making it more
6 difficult to retrofit the building. Let's say we want
7 to install new technology, solar panels, insulated
8 windows.

9 MARGARET HERMAN: We don't believe so. As
10 I said, we have worked with the New York Public
11 Library on many other libraries. First of all, in
12 general, we don't have anything to do with the
13 interior spaces so we want to work with owners on
14 making changes that will preserve the historic
15 character while allowing them to continue to offer
16 the services that are so important to their
17 communities, and so we have a staff of 70 or 80 folks
18 that work with property owners, offering expertise,
19 technical expertise, information about different
20 materials and things like that, and our rules do
21 allow for things like solar panels and things of that
22 nature. As we go forward, we will certainly work with
23 New York Public Library to work with them on any of
24 these changes.

1
2 STEVEN THOMSON: If I could add, in 2023,
3 the Commission passed a new rule allowing more
4 flexible installation of solar panels and a faster
5 review of that sort of installation.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: All right. Thank
7 you so much. No more questions.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you, Council
9 Member.

10 Thank you. This applicant panel is now
11 excused.

12 Counsel, are there any members of the
13 public wish to testify on this item?

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, there's no one in
15 person or online signed up to testify.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. There being
17 no other members of the public who wish to testify
18 regarding LU80 for the landmarking of the New York
19 Public Library Tremont branch, the public hearing is
20 now closed.

21 We will now vote on LU82 for the
22 Sunnyside Barnett Article XI, which we just heard.
23 Members of the Subcommittee who have questions or
24 remarks about today's items, please let me know.

I will now call for a vote to approve the
Article XI tax exemption request for Sunnyside
Barnett Project LU82 with the support of Council
Member Won.

Counsel, please call the roll.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Hanks.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Aye.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Feliz.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: I vote yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Fariás.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: I vote aye.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Marte.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: I vote aye.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Nurse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I vote aye.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Salaam.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: I vote aye.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: With a vote of six in
the affirmative, no in the negative, and no
abstentions, the items are adopted and referred to
the full Land Use Committee.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay, that concludes
today's business.

1
2 I would like to thank the members of the
3 public, my Colleagues, Subcommittee Counsel, Land Use
4 Staff, and the Sergeant-at-Arms for your
5 participation today.

6 This meeting is hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]

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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 June 16, 2024