

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND

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MARITIME USES

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND
MARITIME USES

March 6, 2019
Start: 12:05 p.m.
Recess: 12:21 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 Landmarks Preservation
Commission, LPC

David Thom
Spokesperson for the Park Terrace North Block
Association

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Good afternoon,
welcome to this meeting of the Subcommittee on
Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses. I'm
Council Member Adrienne Adams, the Chair of this
Subcommittee. We are joined today by Council Members
Koo, Barron and Miller. And as we wait for LPC we
will pause at this time. Thank you. Today we will be
holding a public hearing on LU 356, the designation
by the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the Park
Terrace West, West 127th Street historic district.
The historic district is located in the Inwood
section of Manhattan in Council Member Rodriguez's
district. According to LPC's designation report, the
Park Terrace West, West 217th Street historic
district consists of a picturesque enclave of 15
early 20th century Tudor and colonial revival style
houses. LPC held a hearing on the designation on
February 20th, 2018, eight people spoke in favor of
the designation as proposed. The Commission also
received letters in support of the district from
Unites States Congressman Adriano Espaillat; the
Office of Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer,
Moving Forward Unidos, Inwood Preservation, Inwood

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2 Owners Coalition and four letters from property
3 owners on Park Terrace West and West 217th Street and
4 several property owners from the Inwood neighborhood.
5 The Commission received no testimony or letters in
6 opposition to the proposed designation. I, I now call
7 on LPC to testify on the designation Kate McHale.
8 Before you begin Counsel will swear you in.

9 COMMITTEE CLERKE: Could you state your
10 name before answering? Do you affirm to tell the
11 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in
12 your testimony before this Subcommittee and in
13 response to all Council Member questions?

14 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Kate Lemos McHale,
15 yes, I do.

16 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.

17 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Good afternoon Chair
18 Adams and Subcommittee members. I'm Kate Lemos
19 McHale, Director of Research at the Landmarks
20 Preservation Commission. Thank you for the
21 opportunity to present the recent designation of the
22 Park Terrace West, West 217th Street historic
23 district, which was designated on December 11th,
24 2018. Located in Inwood near, near the Northern tip
25 of Manhattan, the district consists of a picturesque

2 enclave of fifteen early 20th century houses. It's
3 appealing character and historic significance is
4 created by its uniform scale, architectural styles
5 and consistency of building materials, combined with
6 an emphasis on landscaped gardens and making
7 provisions for the automobile. This district was
8 identified as part of the Commission's work in
9 Inwood, including surveys of the neighborhood in 2008
10 and more recently in conjunction with the recent
11 rezoning to identify opportunities for historic
12 preservation. At LPC's Public Hearing on November
13 20th, since you just listed that testimony, I won't
14 repeat it all but we did have a lot of support for
15 this designation including from elected officials and
16 neighborhood groups and property owners in the
17 district. The historic district extends along the
18 north side of West 217th Street and along Park
19 Terrace West as shown here. It is a cohesive grouping
20 of two-story brick houses that is surrounded by early
21 20th century apartment buildings and nearby parks.
22 More commonly seen in other boroughs, these free
23 standing and semi-detached houses reflect the time
24 period when they were built using land that had been
25 part of a large estate at the northern most tip of

2 Manhattan. Inwood's topography has played an
3 important role in the history of the area and in the
4 development and physical character of the Park
5 Terrace West, West 217th Street historic district.
6 Shown in this 1836 topographical map, Inwood's hills
7 were the location of Revolutionary War forts and its
8 valleys and plateaus were farmed, quarried and later
9 became vast estates, and Kingsbridge Road, now
10 Broadway ran diagonally through the center linking it
11 to Lower Manhattan. Inwood was historically known as
12 Tubby Hook until around 1854. Initially the land on
13 which the historic district was developed was part of
14 the Isaac and Michael Dyckman farm. In 1851 it was
15 divided and a 26-acre parcel was sold to John Ferris
16 Seaman and his wife Ann Drake-Seaman. The Seaman
17 estate is shown in these maps on the top in the red
18 rectangle is the... is the general area of the
19 district. And on this map, it's shown by the red dot.
20 And as you can see in the 1885 Robinson map on the
21 right, the city began to develop around the edges of
22 these estates in the late 19th century and that
23 really lends to the particular sense of place in the
24 way it stands out from the rest of the neighborhood
25 today. Upon Ann Drake-Seaman's death in 1878, the

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property was left to a nephew, Drake divided the bulk of the property into lots which were sold to developers. This 1900 map shows these properties and the streets that were laid out on the Seaman-Drake property. The Seaman-Drake estate mansion, shown on the lower block on this map and in the photo on the left, remained until 1938. In 1906, the extension of the Interborough Rapid Transit subway line spurred the initial residential development of the area. And you can see that starting on the right. Further development was spurred by the subsequent opening of the IND subway line in 1920. Additionally, the creation of two neighborhood parks, Isham Park, a gift from Julia Isham-Taylor in 1911 and Inwood Hill Park, which was created by the city in 1916, provided public amenities that drew developers and residents to the area. The historic district was developed with detached and semi-detached houses in the 1920s and 30s, as larger apartment buildings were being constructed elsewhere in the neighborhood. By 1934, as you can see on this map, most of the houses had been built in the historic district and the Seaman-Drake mansion was still there, the last portion of the area to be developed. And this 1937 aerial

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photograph shows a similar view before the Seaman-
Drake house property was redeveloped and the orange
arrows on this photo indicate the buildings that are
included in the historic district. You'll note that
it draws... the boundary does not include the large
apartment building that separates buildings on Park
Terrace West and that was not included because it
doesn't share the same architectural qualities, scale
or really development histories as these houses. Just
some analysis of the... of the houses. As you can see
on this map, the historic district contains houses
along the block of West 217th Street and the northern
section of Park Terrace West where the two streets
intersect. Designed in both the colonial revival and
the Tudor revival styles they were built between 1921
and 1935 and the historic district shows a high level
of integrity with, with really only minor alterations
such as the replacement of windows, in some cases
dormers have been resided or some of the vertical
woodwork that was part of the Tudor stylistic
features has been replaced but in general they really
retain a high level of integrity and the picturesque
streetscapes possess a special character and sense of
place defined by the houses' uniform scale, use of

2 similar period styles and materials, and similar
3 setbacks from the street with gardens that accentuate
4 the topography. The earliest buildings in the
5 district are these residences along Park Terrace
6 West, they were constructed in 1921 and these combine
7 elements of the colonial revival style and the
8 craftsman style especially in terms of the patterned
9 brick work and horizontal emphasis. Farther along
10 Park Terrace West, these were constructed a few years
11 later between 1924 and 1925, they were designed by
12 Abraham Zacharius as two-family houses and they also
13 combine colonial revival stylistic features with
14 craftsman features and retain original arts and craft
15 style doors and decorative tile at the entrances. On
16 Park... along West 217th Street the houses were
17 designed primarily in the Tudor revival style and
18 built between 1933 and 1935, they were all developed
19 and constructed by the same firm, Kessler and Sayetta
20 as speculative properties. And the Tudor, Tudor
21 revival style is evident in their steep roof gables,
22 half timbering, prominent chimneys, and turret
23 enclosed entries. Several of the houses mirror each
24 other alongside... on either side of the drive... a
25 shared driveway so there's a, a nice consistency

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2 along the street. Influenced by the early 20th
3 century modern car culture, all of these houses were
4 built with garages either in the basement or as
5 separate buildings in the rear of the lot. The houses
6 are set back from the street with gardens, retaining
7 walls and pathways that are influenced by the
8 topography. Unusual for Manhattan, this small
9 historic district reflects the popularity of many
10 suburban qualities along with convenient access to
11 Manhattan. And this part of Inwood was advertised at,
12 at the time this district was developed as country
13 living in the city. The Park Terrace West, West 217th
14 Street historic district is a picturesque enclave of
15 residential architecture that illustrates the
16 popularity of revivalist styles used for residential
17 developments in the 1920s and 30ts. It retains a high
18 level of, of integrity and a strong sense of place.
19 And LPC hopes the Council will uphold this
20 designation, which has broad support from its
21 stakeholders and I'm happy to answer any questions
22 you may have. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you Kate, I, I
24 just have to say that had you not presented this as a
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part of Manhattan this would be Queens, so I just wanted to shout out my borough.

KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: But the Tudor style really, really beautiful by the way. Are there questions from my colleagues today, questions? Okay, I'd like to also mention we have been joined by Council Member Treyger. Thank you very much for your testimony.

KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Thank you and apologize for arriving late.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: It's okay, we understand, we understand. I see that we do have one member of the public that wishes to testify on this item, Mr. David Thom will you please step up and please state your name for the record.

DAVID THOM: David Thom, T h o m.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, thank you very much, you may proceed.

DAVID THOM: I apologize I'm just pulling my notes which have now disappeared. Oh well, so, I am appearing today on behalf of the Park Terrace North Block Association which represents the West 217th Street block, that's one of the old names for

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2 it. More specifically, I am representing the property
3 owners at 527, 52... 531, 533, 535, 537, 539, 545 West
4 217th Street; 81, 89, 91... it... sorry, 95 and 96 Park
5 Terrace West all of whom I've been coordinating with
6 throughout the Landmarks process and we're just here
7 to say that we support the designation as property
8 owners of some of the affected properties and we feel
9 that it is indeed a, a very unique collection of
10 properties as representative of very specific moment
11 in time in Manhattan's development. There are many
12 additional great architectural resources in Inwood
13 and we certainly have heard and, and also support the
14 idea of additional historic districts in the future
15 but certainly this is a good start and we do ask that
16 you consider approving the designation as proposed.
17 If there's any questions I'm happy to answer them
18 today.

19 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much
20 for being here, we certainly appreciate your
21 testimony. Are there questions from my colleagues?
22 Okay, thank you very much, you may step down.

23 DAVID THOM: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Are there any other
25 members of the public that wish to testify on this

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item? Seeing none the public hearing on LU 356 is now closed and this item will be laid over. That concludes our public hearings for today. I'd like to thank members of the public, my colleagues, 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

March 15, 2019