

TESTIMONY OF STEPHEN CHU
NOMINEE TO THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES, & ELECTIONS
JANUARY 9, 2023

Good morning and thank you to Speaker Adams, Chair Powers, and members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify before you. It is a great honor to be nominated by Mayor Adams to serve on the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

My name is Stephen Chu. I was born in San Jose, California and did my college education at both UC Berkeley and the University IUAV di Venezia. My understanding of the importance of preservation began with studies in architectural history and urban planning. As a young architecture student, it was eye opening to see a different perspective of design and planning, where the urban fabric is predominantly historic and protected. Discussions centering around words such as 'appropriate', 'dialogue' and 'relevant' were common in addition to focusing on the details and craftsmanship. At the same time, I was impressed by the bold changes and modern materials, all the while respecting and celebrating the historic building.

I moved to NYC in 1997 seeking many things: culture, community, diversity, history, architecture, and a city where 8 million people lived together in seemingly impossible situations. A bustling city with energy, innovation and progress yet still rooted with spectacular examples of its history within its fabric.

I have spent over 25 years living in NYC, first in Manhattan Chinatown and the Lower East Side, then Brooklyn and finally Ridgewood, Queens where I have resided since 2004.

I am an Associate Professor at Pratt University where I teach building graduate architecture students about building materials and exterior detailing.

I am also a design principal at Ennead Architects-formally Polshek Partnership where I have been employed since 1996. The late James Polshek founded the firm on principles with a tradition of respect for context and belief that making architecture is an inherently civic act that comes with great social responsibility. He taught me that a building must belong to its community and reminded us of the positive power of public space. I had the opportunity to work on important NYC Landmarks institutions such as Carnegie Hall, the American Museum of Natural History Rose Planetarium, the New York City Center, and the Brooklyn Museum.

Continuing the tradition of cultural, civic work, I have had the opportunity of presenting proposals such as 425 Lafayette – home of the Public Theater as an example of adaptive reuse of the original Astor library and recently a proposal for a renovation of the Delacorte Theater in Central Park.

I recognize that the NYCLPC is the largest and most important preservation commission in the country. I understand that it is the responsibility of a Commissioner to protect New York City's

architecturally, historically, and culturally significant buildings and sites by granting them landmark or historic status and regulating them after designation. If nominated, I look forward to working in partnership with elected officials and community members to carry out this mission while allowing for the appropriate change and development that the cities and its residents require.

I believe that my experience in the practice would be useful to the Commission in various ways:

- I have worked with many important NYC institutions, community, cultural, educational and health care which has given me some insight to the broad visions which can affect existing facilities and shape future expansion goals.
- I understand the complex issues involved in performing design alterations to significant historic landmarked structures, their neighbors, and the city infrastructure around them.
- I understand the procedures for collaborating with various city agencies such as the Parks Department, Central Park Conservancy, NYC Design Commission, DDC, DCLA, and LPC.
- I understand the potential complexities involved in balancing a client's desires with the Commission's mission and determinations.
- I understand the processes involved in realizing a project from design through construction, including the importance of proper detailing as well as the performance and maintenance needs of new and existing landmarks.

I can only hope that the skills and experience that I have gained can add to the Commission's impressive qualifications and track record.

NYC is the past, present, and future. I understand that institutions need to evolve, adapt, and change as does the city as a whole. We can continue its tradition of being diverse, progressive, inclusive without compromising our vibrancy and relevancy. If appointed, I will do my best to preserve and protect sites that reflect diversity and history in all five boroughs and ensure that they remain in intact for years to come.

I believe in the positivity of Architecture and that the city must manifest its history, its cultural and ethnic diversity and expression in its physical presence.

It is an honor to have the responsibility to preserve the history and culture of this great city but also in learning more about the complicated issues involved in the process of this stewardship. I look forward to meeting and working in collaboration with all of you.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination and I welcome any questions.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 1/9/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: STEPHEN CHU

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