

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND
MARITIME USES

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February 27, 2017
Start: 11:22 a.m.
Recess: 2:12 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.
16th Fl.

B E F O R E: PETER A. KOO
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Annabel Palma
Deborah L. Rose
Rosie Mendez
Stephen T. Levin
Inez D. Barron
Ben Kallos

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

Lisa Kersavage. Director
Strategic Planning and Special Projects
Landmarks Preservation Commission, LPC

Lauren George, External Affairs
Landmarks Preservation Commission, LPC

Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director
Historic District Council

Tara Kelly, Vice President
Municipal Arts Society of New York

Andrea Golden
New York Landmarks Conservancy

Heather Shea, Chief Executive Officer
United Palace Theater

Vivian Ducas, Member
Land Use Committee,
Community Board 12, Manhattan

Pat Courtney
Inwood Preservation

Michael Henry Adams
Save Harlem Now

Dr. Ken Chan
Governing Board Member
Browne Street Community Church

Aaron Chin, Senior Pastor
Browne Street Community Church

Ashira Bonitas
Browne Street Community Church

Joan MacArthur, Member
Browne Street Community Church

Rachel Levy, Executive Director
Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts

Christabel Gough
Society for the Architecture of the City

[sound check, pause]

CHAIRPERSON KOO: [gavel] Good morning.

I am Councilman Koo, Chair of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses. We are joined by Council Members Palm, Mendez, Kallos and also Chair Greenfield and Council Member Reynoso. We will be holding a public hearing on nine individual Landmarks applications today proposed for designation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission pursuant to Section 3020 of the City Charter. The landmarking of these building located in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island. It is a part of LPC's Backlog Initiative the resolves the statutes—to resolve the status of 95 sites that were calendared but never designated. LPC calendared some of these sites decades ago. One site was calendared only 50 years ago in 1966, two months after the Landmark Law was first enacted. LPC represents the nine items together in one presentation, and then we will hear testimony from the public. The items are as follows:

The first item is LU 574, 183-195

Broadway in Council Member Reynoso's district in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The Council Member has indicated that he supports the designation.

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The second item is LU 575, Saint Barbara's Roman Catholic Church, located at 138 Bleecker Street in Council Member Espinal's district in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The Council Member has indicated he supports his designation—this designation.

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The third item is LU 576, the Excelsior Steam Power Company Building, located at 33-43 Gold Street in Council Member Chin's district. The Council Member has indicated she supports this designation.

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The fourth item is LU 577, the Bergdorf Goodman Building, located at 754 Fifth Avenue also known as 2 West 58th Street in Council Member Garodnick's district in Manhattan. The Council Member has indicated he supports this designation.

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The fifth item is LU 578, a wood frame house, located at 412 East 85th Street in Council Member Kallos' district in Manhattan. The Council Member has indicated he supports this designation.

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The sixth item is LU 580 the Lowe's 170-175th Street Theater located at 4140-4156 Broadway in Council Member Rodriguez's district in Manhattan.

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2 The seventh item is LU 581 the Protest-
3 the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing also
4 known as Brown Street Community Church, located at
5 143-11 Roosevelt Avenue in the district I live in in
6 Queens.

7 The eighth item is LU 582, the Lakeman-
8 Cortelyou-Taylor House, located at 2286 Richmond Road
9 in Council Member Matteo's district in Staten Island.

10 The ninth item is LU 583, the Brougham
11 Cottage, located at 4746 Amboy Road in Council Member
12 Borelli's district in Staten Island. The Council
13 Member has indicated he supports this designation.

14 Council Member Chin has submitted a
15 letter, which she has asked to be read into the
16 record supporting LU 576, the designation of the
17 Excelsior Steam Power Company Building in her
18 district. So I'm gong to read her letter into the
19 records.

20 Dear Chairman Koo: It is with great
21 pleasure that I write to you to give my full support
22 for the landmark designation of the Excelsior Steam
23 Power Company—the Steam Power Company Building in my
24 district nested among modern scry—oh no, modern
25 skyscrapers that the Excelsior is the oldest known

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2 purpose built commercial power generation station
3 still standing in Manhattan, a constant reminder that
4 our city's prominent role as a pioneer in the
5 electrical illumination and power. This building is
6 a testimony to Lower Manhattan's history as a hub of
7 prime houses and jewelry and manufacturers. As one
8 of the superb properties in my district that are
9 being designated as part of the Backlog Initiative of
10 the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I'm very
11 happy to see the Excelsior Building get the
12 recognition that it has long deserved. I would like
13 to thank Landmarks Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan for her
14 leadership in ensuring that these buildings are
15 protected for current and future generation of New
16 Yorkers. I would also like to thank you and members
17 of the subcommittee for this opportunity to express
18 my support, and to urge a vote in favor of these
19 historic designations. Sincerely, Margaret Chin,
20 Council Member District 1, New York City Council.
21 Before we go to other items, I would like to ask
22 Chair Greenfield to say a few words to welcome law
23 students.

24 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Thank you, Chair
25 Koo. I appreciate the opportunity. First, I want to

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2 apologize that we started a little bit late. We had
3 an unusual action prior in the Subcommittee on Zoning
4 and Franchises where the city withdrew an application
5 before the subcommittee, which doesn't happen all
6 that often. So that delayed us today, and apologies
7 for that. I do want to welcome all of my students
8 who—from Brooklyn School who are taking my New York
9 City Zoning and Land Use class. Thank you for
10 joining us here today, and just to quickly summarize
11 the events for you benefit and the benefit for those
12 who are at home as well, we have nine applications
13 from the Landmarks Preservation Commission that we're
14 going to review today. We're going to vote on most
15 but not all of them. Some of the controversial ones
16 we're not actually going to vote for. These
17 applications are actually a direct result of
18 legislation that Chair Koo and myself passed a few
19 months ago called Intro 775-A, which requires that
20 the Landmarks Preservation Commission go through what
21 we called the backlog items, items that have in some
22 cases been on the calendar for as many as 50 years
23 including one of which today has actually been the
24 calendar for 50 years, and so it's been a long time
25 coming. We're actually having this final

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2 consideration and the legislation as it provides it
3 going forward. There are time limits to prevent
4 that. We don't wait another 50 years for future
5 actions as well, and I certainly also want to echo
6 the remarks of the chair and of Council Member Chin
7 in thanking the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation
8 Commission and Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan for doing
9 outstanding work and working with us to clear the
10 backlog and very much looking forward to the
11 information from the Landmarks Preservation
12 Commission, and from the public and the Council
13 Members as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Chair. I
15 will not open the public hearings for all nine new-
16 new applications. Lorraine George and Lisa Kersavage
17 for LPC to testify for their own land items.

18 LISA KERSAVAGE: Good morning Council
19 Members. My name is Lisa Kersavage. I'm the
20 Director of Strategic Planning and Special Projects
21 at Landmarks Preservation Commission. I'm going to
22 provide a very brief background on the Backlog
23 Initiative, and then go through short individual
24 presentations. In order to accommodate different
25 schedules, I'm not going to go in the order of the

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2 agenda. So bear with me if I skip around a little
3 bit. So on December 13th, the Landmarks Preservation
4 Commission voted unanimously to designate 10
5 properties, which effectively can clear the back-the
6 agencies Backlog Initiative and 18-month plan to
7 efficiently and transparently address 95 properties
8 that were placed on the Commission's calendar prior
9 to 2010, 85% of which have been calendared 20 or more
10 years ago. Through this entire process, the
11 Commission designated 27 boroughs-27 properties in
12 all five boroughs. Today 9 of the 10 properties the
13 Commission designated on December 13th are before
14 you. I will make a brief presentation on each of the
15 9 and we've also submitted written testimony and
16 materials. So we're going to start with Lakeman
17 House. [pause] Okay. The Lakeman-Cortelyou-Taylor
18 House is a rare Dutch Colonial style farm house
19 significant both as an early Dutch Colonial building
20 with a gambrel roof and for its association with
21 Staten Island history. It is located on the south
22 side of Richmond Road just opposite of Moravian
23 Cemetery in Neudorf, and I'd like to point out that
24 the designation site only includes the footprints of
25 the building and not the larger lot that you see here

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2 in a dotted line. The building has characteristics
3 of the Dutch-American houses—of Dutch-Americans and
4 it appears that the one-story wing, which is very low
5 in scale is the earliest part of the house dating
6 from the late 17th or more likely early—early 18th
7 Century. The house is particularly noteworthy as the
8 home of Owen Cortelyou. He was one of the founders
9 of the Moravian Cemetery on Staten Island, it played
10 an important role in the American Revolutionary War
11 in Staten Island. As is characteristic of colonial
12 farmhouses, the house originally oriented facing
13 southwards for maximum light. It did not have a door
14 facing Richmond Road until the 20th Century. The
15 building had some alterations—had to have some
16 alterations over time, but retains many of its Dutch
17 features. Frederick Xavier Eikerenkoetter acquired
18 the house in 1928, which he used for both a residence
19 and for his business, and it has remained in
20 ownership of the Eikerenkoetter Family and is
21 currently as offices for the business. Extensive
22 restoration work, including removal of modern
23 additions was done in 2000 to 2002.

24 Okay, I'm going to move onto Brougham
25 Cottage then, and then go through the—rest of them.

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[background comments, pause] Okay, sorry we had a
little printing error. I'm terribly sorry.

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[background comments, pause] Sorry, we had a little
technical stuff here. So the Brougham Cottage is a
very Dutch-American farm house significant as a
reminder of Staten Island rural heritage and its
vernacular architectural traditions. It is located
on the south of Amboy in Annandale, Staten Island.
The historic house is built in three campaigns. It's
western ring (sic) that appears to date from the
first half of the 18th Century, likely the 1720s or
1730s. It's Western—a later section that probably
dates the 1790s or early 1800s, and a tall 1-1/2
story eastern unit. Probably was erected probably was
erected prior to the 1840s. The profile is
characteristic Dutch with—is—is characteristic of
Dutch Colonial farm houses, and like Lakeman and was
typical of these farm houses, the houses originally
oriented facing southwards for maximum light and
didn't have a door facing Amboy Road until the 20th
Century, and later in the 1920s when it became in use
for a real estate office, an entrance was created on
Amboy Road. And although the house has undergone
some alterations, it retains its historic form and

1 many of its characteristic Dutch-American features.

2 Today Brougham Cottage survives as a rare example of

3 the small vernacular farm houses that were once

4 common in the 18th and early 19th Centuries, but have

5 but disappeared in Staten Island. It is a significant

6 example of Dutch-American design and a reminder of

7 Staten Island's rural history. Its site is now as

8 part of the New York City Parks and Recreation

9 Department Blue Heron Park. [pause]

10
11 Okay, and now we'll go back to the order

12 of the agenda. We're going to go to Brooklyn.

13 [background comments, pause]

14 Located on the northeast corner of

15 Broadway and Driggs Avenue in Williamsburg, 183 to

16 195 Broadway is one of only a small number of cast

17 iron buildings that were constructed in Brooklyn.

18 Built in 1882 to '83, the building was part of a wave

19 of post-Civil War redevelopment along Broadway, which

20 led to the erection of monumental banks and premier

21 stores and transformed Lower Broadway into

22 Williamsburg's principal artery. The building

23 originally served as a commercial structure with

24 stores facing on the ground floor, and later

25 transformed into manufacturing use. The buildings

1
2 façade is manufactured by the Atlantic Iron Works and
3 has extensive ornamental details. Today 183 to 195
4 Broadway's cast iron façade remains virtually intact—
5 intact above the first story.

6 St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church is
7 located in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn.
8 The church, which is located on the intersection of
9 Bleecker Street and Central Avenue is one of the most
10 unusual and distinctive Ecclesiastical buildings New
11 York City. It was built between 1907 and 1910 and is
12 one of the earliest churches in the northeastern
13 United States to incorporate the Spanish Colonial
14 Revival style of architecture, which is fairly
15 uncommon in the region. Saint Barbara's Parish, which
16 was founded in 1893 by German immigrant families has
17 continued to serve successive waves of residents of
18 varying ethnicities and nationalities. The church
19 was designed by Helme Huberty, a leading Brooklyn
20 architectural firm that was responsible for many
21 important public and institutions. Constructed of
22 yellow brick and white terracotta, the church's
23 tower—the church tower is above the low right
24 resident—low-rise residences of the surrounding area,
25 and is one of Buchwick's most imposing buildings.

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2 St. Barbara's is an important presence in the Bush-in
3 Bushwick both in terms of architecture and its
4 contributions to the social fabric of the
5 neighborhood. It remains remarkably intact as one of
6 Bushwick's most prominent and significant religious
7 structures.

8 The Excelsior Steam Power Company
9 Building is located on Gold Street in Lower
10 Manhattan. I'd like to note that there's a sidewalk
11 bridge on it that is currently in front of the
12 building making it difficult to photograph the
13 building. So we are using some older photographs,
14 but they're noted as such. A reminder of New York's
15 critical role in the development of electric lighting
16 and power systems in the United States, the Excelsior
17 Steam Power Company Building is the oldest known
18 purpose-built commercial generating station in
19 Manhattan. It is one of the few major structures
20 remaining from Manhattan's pioneering era for
21 electric lighting and power, which began—began with
22 the illumination of a portion of Broadway in 1880 and
23 ended with the consolidation of dozens of utilities
24 and to the New York Edison Building in 1901.
25 Designed by engineer and architect William C.

1
2 Gunnell, and constructed by master mason Robert
3 Baird, the Excelsior Steam Power Company Building was
4 operational by 1888 when it began generating and
5 distributing electric power to printing houses,
6 jewelry manufacturers and other industrial clients
7 within the surrounding area for their elevators,
8 presses, doubling machinery and other equipment. The
9 Excelsior Steam Company Building provided electricity
10 for lighting and power to the local factories and
11 office buildings for many years, and was later
12 converted from a generating-generating station into
13 substation. In 1978, Consolidated Edison sold the
14 building, and it was subsequently renovated for
15 residential use.

16 Nestled among the office towers,
17 apartment houses and hotels in Lower Manhattan on
18 Narrow Gold Street, the Excelsior Steam Power Company
19 Building remains a significant link to Lower
20 Manhattan's industrial past. Located at the southern
21 end of Granderly Plaza, 754 Fifth Avenue occupies one
22 of the most prominent sites on the Fifth Avenue
23 Retail Corridor. The building designed by the
24 preeminent designer Ely Jacques Kahn is an excellent
25 example of modern classical design and is significant

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2 for its association with Bergdorf Goodman, one of New
3 York City's premier retail establishments. Brown
4 developed the sites in 1927 to '28 as seven separate
5 Bergdorf aesthetically unified buildings. Ely
6 Jacques Khan, one of the most important New York
7 architects of the 20th Century designed the buildings
8 in the modern classical style. Bergdorf Goodman, one
9 of New York City's most celebrated department stores
10 was an original tenant. This store, which originally
11 began as a tailor shop a Fifth Avenue and 19th Street
12 revolutionized the women's clothing industry by
13 becoming the first American couturier to offer ready-
14 to-wear clothing. Like many other stores that
15 followed the retail migration north along Fifth
16 Avenue, ultimately occupying the site's northern most
17 building on 59th Street and Fifth Avenue. Today
18 Bergdorf Goodman occupies all but the southeast
19 corner of the complex. Alterations to the first two
20 stories have sought to unify this façade reflecting
21 the success of Bergdorf Goodman. Kahn's original
22 design remains largely intact above the second story,
23 and continues to just separate but aesthetically
24 unified buildings. Set among a number of high-rise
25 buildings, Bergdorf Goodman retains a historic

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2 relationship to Granderly Plaza. It is significant
3 for its association with Ely Jacques Kahn, Bergdorf
4 Goodman, and its role in the commercial development
5 of Fifth Avenue.

6 412 East 85th Street is a rare wood frame
7 house on the Upper East Side built around 1860. The
8 house is one of only six pre-Civil War wood frame
9 houses to remain on the Upper East Side and serves as
10 a reminder of the earliest period of construction in
11 Upper Manhattan. It's located on the south side of
12 85th Street between First Avenue and York Avenue.

13 The house originally was in the Yorkville
14 neighborhood, which was originally a rural village
15 with working farms in state with prominent New York
16 City families. The house has seen a series of
17 changes and a-and owners throughout the years all
18 while maintaining its wooden three-bay wide façade
19 and entry location. In 1996, the De Vito Family
20 purchased the house, and throughout the years they
21 have worked to complete extensive renovation
22 including the reconstruction of the porch and other
23 details. Today, the house is a reminder of Yorkville
24 and its rural origins in the late 19th Century, and
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2 we're going to skip through this one and come back to
3 that. I understand.

4 The Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of
5 Flushing today the Bound Street Community Church is
6 located in Downtown Flushing at the intersection of
7 Browne Street and Roosevelt Avenue. Built by the
8 Reformed Dutch Congregation in 1892 the church is
9 significant as an excellent example of the Romanesque
10 Revival style, notable for its exceptional corner
11 bell tower, intricate and inventive brickwork and a
12 variety of round arch openings and opalescent stained
13 glass windows. The church was dedicated in November
14 of 1982. In addition the main sanctuary assembly
15 space, the northern most spaces seen on the left
16 provided rooms for a chapel Sunday school, library
17 and upstairs kitchen. The building has strong
18 masking and fine brick detailing and windows designed
19 by the Tiffany Glass Company of New York.

20 When the church was calendared in 2003 as
21 lot in part, the proposal included both the 1892
22 church and the 1926 annex, as shown in the dotted red
23 lines, which hare here. As part of the Backlog
24 Initiative, a meeting of February 23rd of 2016, the
25 Commission prioritized designation as a lot in part

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2 with the removal of the annex and the parking lot
3 from the landmarked site. As shown in the public
4 hearing on—in November '15, the proposed boundary in
5 red solid lines includes on the 1892 church building
6 for the designation. This is the sold red line. In
7 a public hearing and in several meetings LPC staff
8 have had with the church, the question was raised as
9 to whether the chapel at the rear of the building is
10 original to the building, and that's here. LPC staff
11 have taken this question very seriously, and have
12 concluded that it is original to the building. Is it
13 based on forensics or the examination of the building
14 materials? On historic photographs such as this 1900
15 photo showing the chapel and also examining fire
16 insurance maps. You can see here the sanctuary space
17 shows up in fire insurance maps in 1892, 1917 and
18 1934.

19 In the 17th Century the citizens of
20 Flushing formally declared freedom by religion-
21 freedom of religion by issuing the Flushing
22 Remonstrance. Continuing this tradition of faith and
23 tolerance this multi-denominational church reflects
24 the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of the
25 Flushing community maintaining much of its original

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2 materials and workmanship, the church congregation
3 diligently and sensitively maintained this building.
4 This one town—one of Downtown Flushing most prominent
5 and significant religious structures. So with that
6 like--

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [interposing] Thank
8 you.

9 LISA KERSAVAGE: --I could do Lowe's as
10 well or we'll wait for that one?

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah, we'll wait. Go
12 ahead yeah. Go ahead and do it.

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: Okay. [background
14 comments, pause] The Lowe's 175th Street Theater is
15 located on—by West 175th and 176th Street, Broadway
16 and Wadsworth Avenue and reaching 60 feet in height.
17 It is a massive building commanding an entire block
18 of Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood, and
19 featuring exuberant terracotta ornaments, the Lowe's
20 175th Street Theater exemplifies the America movie
21 palace at its most monumental and spectacular. It
22 was one of the select handful of venues built by
23 Lowe's as wonder theaters, enormous neighborhood
24 movie palaces opened in 1920 and 1930 that were among
25 the most lavish ever constructed in New York City.

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2 Unusual among Manhattan movie palaces for its
3 construction as a free-standing structure built to be
4 viewed and admired from all sides, according to the
5 movie palace historian Ben M. Hall. It was the first
6 theater in Washington Heights designed specifically
7 for talking pictures and upon its opening in 1930 was
8 hailed by the press as mammoth and magnificent, and
9 one of the most costly and elaborate theaters in the
10 Lowe's chain. The architects of Lowe's 175th Street
11 Theater Thomas W. Lamb was Lowe's most favorite
12 architect, the renown designer of more than 300
13 theaters across the country and around the world.
14 Rare in New York City for its use of historic Indian
15 architectural elements, is one of a small group of
16 India-Indo-Persian movie theaters designed by Lamb
17 between 1928 and 1932 that are considered to be his
18 last great palaces. Its in-intricate and
19 unconventional terracotta ornament, which covers the
20 entire 175th façade and-and includes elaborated
21 tiered plasters, bigarots (sp?), lancet arches and
22 other motifs. Within keeping with Lamb's goal of
23 providing mover goers in his words, "A thoroughly
24 foreign experience in which the mind is free to
25 frolic and becomes receptive to entertainment."

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2 Remarkably well preserved, the building the posses
3 its original entrance doors, box offices, vertical
4 bay plane (sic) and imposing corner marquis. The only
5 one of Lowe's wonder theaters to retain all of these
6 features from the day of its opening. Over nearly
7 four decades the Lowe's 175th Street introduced
8 Washington Heights movie goers to dozens of classic
9 films and hosted appearances by movie stars such a
10 Elanor Powell and Julie Garland—Julie Garland. By
11 the 1960s economics of operating large movie theaters
12 had become increasingly difficult and in 1969 Lowe's
13 sold the building the United Christian Evangelic—
14 Evangelistic Association led—led by Reverend
15 Frederick Joseph Eikerenkoetter. Excuse me for the
16 pronunciation. Known as Reverend Ike, who renamed it
17 the United Palace. At the United Palace, Reverend
18 Ike's ministry reached its peak welcoming thousands
19 of worshippers each week, and becoming one of the
20 country's largest congregations. Reverend Ike's
21 television program, which is the first hosted by an
22 African-American religious leader when it debuted in
23 1973 often featured him on the United Palace stage.
24 Maintained in an excellent state of preserved, United
25 Palace continues to function as a house of worship

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2 while hosting community performing arts groups, film
3 screenings and other cultural events. I think it's a
4 valuable neighborhood resource while still
5 representing in the words of IRA Guide, New York the
6 apogee of movie palace glamour in its long gone days
7 when Hollywood ruled the world.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you for the
9 overview. We're going to vote on item LU 582 first.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: [off mic] I have
11 some questions.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Oh. [background
13 comments] Well, we will ask and I'm sorry. I was
14 wrong. Well, we'll ask questions first. So, Council
15 Member Matteo

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you, Chair
17 Koo and Chair Greenfield. I'm glad your law school
18 class is here so that they can discuss some issues
19 we're talking about today. We just don't have a slam
20 dunk issue here for you. I think you should do a
21 term paper on it but we'll discuss that later. Thank
22 you for—for your testimony. We're—we're—we're
23 talking about the Lakeman House on Richmond Road in
24 my district that sits basically right in the heart of
25 the mid-island. The owner of the property is-is

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2 currently here and I think this is a bit of a-a
3 different application. We have an owner who has had
4 this house in his family for generations, a dedicated
5 owner who has made substantial improvements to the
6 house, renovating and maintaining the structure as
7 is. There's the concern that if we move forward with
8 landmarking, it's just going to make maintaining and
9 restoring and keeping up with the property that much
10 more difficult for an owner who is—lives in the area,
11 rents out the—the house to Cyrus Charter and Land
12 Company, which is a real estate firm. The owner has—
13 and his family have reverence with this building.
14 For as long as they own it, they have complete
15 dedication to make restoration and repairs. As you
16 can see, it's in—it's in excellent shape, and I
17 believe 2001, he actually made a very substantial
18 commitment through funding to make the building
19 usable and repair it and maintain it. Some of the
20 work actually removed some of the modern additions
21 and restored it closer to its original conditions,
22 which demonstrates the care the owner has for the
23 property's historical nature. So, I think it's no
24 surprise that for me when I have an owner who's not
25 an absentee owner, who wants to make the repairs,

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2 who's dedicated to the house, dedicated to making
3 sure it lasts and it-it's a benefit to the community
4 as well as to his family. I'm in opposition. The-
5 the owner here is going to be up in opposition to the
6 landmarking. So when an owner has invested a lot
7 into this property and actually restored it based-
8 even based on your report it's close to its earlier
9 way of being, what's the need to landmark the
10 property when you have such a-a case where an owner
11 is just willing to make the restorations and keep it.
12 It has historical nature and make sure that it-it
13 benefits the historical nature and the community.

14 LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, I-we do agree that
15 the-the-the building is in-in terrific condition.
16 You know, I understand that there is a, as-as you say
17 application here and-and through that process there
18 is a-a wonderful and-and careful restoration of the
19 building. You know we were very judicious with the
20 landmarked site, and like I said in the presentation,
21 it only includes the footprint of the building. We
22 don't believe that especially with the building. We
23 don't believe that especially with the building in
24 this kind of condition that are regulations would be
25 onerous to the operation of the business here or the

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2 use of this building. You know we—an restoration
3 work that would be done here could easily be handled
4 by staff level. So, you know, we don't—we understand
5 that there's concerns on the part of the owner about
6 that regulatory system, and we're happy to have
7 continued conversations with the owner, but we feel
8 confident that it really wouldn't be burdensome.
9 Your question was why landmark then? You know,
10 Dutch—there are very few Dutch Colonial houses and,
11 you know, I think it's important to celebrate the
12 history the earliest history of Staten Island. You
13 know, this is a highly meritorious building and we
14 think through designation we would just be enhancing.
15 You know, the condition of this building is already
16 in and, you know, celebrating this for long into the
17 future. You know, we understand that this owner is
18 a—has been a wonderful caretaker, but this, you know,
19 ensures long into the future that this building can
20 be standing and viable.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And—and I—I—
22 appreciate your response and I—I think we just
23 disagree. To me this is not an absentee landlord.
24 This is not an owner who is not—who's not involved.
25 This is not an owner who is not making the

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restorations himself. I've been in government for a long time, and nothing on-on you but any time that we have to go through Landmarks it does hinder a process of renovations. It is more costly. If the-if the owner wasn't involved, if the owner wasn't already making a substantial amount of renovations, I'd have a different stance, but we have a-a Staten Islander who generations in his family who have kept this house going and improving it, and I think the balance here that we should err on the side of the owner in-in making sure that he has his property rights, and be able to make the restorations. He's proven that he has already. I have complete confidence that the family will continue that. So I think the--the balance here is in favor of the property owner, and he has shown it and his family has shown their dedication to it, and I think we believe that we want the--the house to remain in this pristine and historical condition, and I think it is and so from where I stand and my constituent that we'd like to see it not landmarked and-and give every opportunity to the--to the owner to continue his efforts and the efforts of his family to keep the condition and

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2 better the condition of the house the way he has been
3 over-over years and--

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LISA KERSAVAGE: [interposing] Yeah,

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just-just--

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: [interposing]

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sure.

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LISA KERSAVAGE: --two quick things. So

9 one thing about the-the benefit of-of LPC designation
10 is that we have highly trained very technically aware
11 staff who, I mean, that is their perception of-of the
12 regulations being onerous, we also in-in essence
13 offer free technical support that can really benefit
14 the building maintenance over time just through
15 choosing the right materials and things like that.
16 So we really do strive to be very customer service
17 oriented, and to always get to yes to, you know,
18 approve what a-what a property owner would want. And
19 I think, you know, in designation this is clearly a
20 wonderful property owner. You know we do try and
21 think about, you know, the next property owners and-
22 and, you know, Dutch houses are-are so exceptionally
23 rare so--

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And-and I

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appreciate it and-and again and I-and I think just

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for me the balance is—is to err on the side of the property owner and like I said his—his commitment and family's commitment and you—you said it as well as, you know, he's—he's there. He's making—he's already making it, and to me and—and while you say the burden may be lessened, I believe that there is still an added burden that we shouldn't be putting on an owner who is making, already making the renovations and the commitment to the building. I'll send it back to the chair.

CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you and Chair Greenfield wants to ask some questions.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Thank you very much. Thank you Minority Leader Matteo. So I'm actually curious about this, and yes it is certainly relevant because they have some things here, but we're discussing in general. What is the general philosophy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission when an owner is opposed to a designation, and does it matter in—in—in particular for example in this case where you have an owner who is actually voluntarily upkeeping their property. I think according to your own records around 2000, right, well before you folks were looking at designating

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2 this, the owner voluntarily decided to invest time
3 and effort into restoring the property. So is there—
4 is there a policy of the Landmarks Preservation
5 Commission that you take into consideration if an
6 owner is opposed? Is there a difference between an
7 owner who is keeping a landmark in good stead versus
8 an owner who for example is not keeping the landmark
9 in good stead, and you feel like you have to come in
10 and recue the property? How does that work in terms
11 of your thinking as the Landmarks Preservation
12 Commission?

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, we always strive
14 to have owner support of any designation. You know
15 this is—it becomes a long-term relationship that we
16 want to have positive right from the start. You
17 know, the Backlog Initiative raised issues that are
18 outside of a—a normal designation process for us.
19 So, you know, these are—are kind of exceptional
20 compared to the—the designations that we normally
21 bring forward. And, you know, through this 18-month
22 process we had multiple meetings with owners and, you
23 know, I think that you'll find that there might have
24 been some that were on the record in opposition that
25 maybe over time we've managed to, you know, persuade

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2 that—that are regulatory system is—is not that
3 onerous. So I can't say that there's one philosophy.
4 You know, we certainly—it's not a requirement, as you
5 know, in the Landmarks Law to have owner's support,
6 but it is something that we—we strive mightily to
7 attain. If not outright, you know, written support,
8 then, you know, a feeling of mutual respect moving
9 forward.

10 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: What were the
11 issues the owners raised with you? You said you met
12 with the owners?

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: We had met with the
14 owners.

15 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: So what were the
16 issues that were raised directly with you, and how
17 did you attempt to address that?

18 LISA KERSAVAGE: With—with which property?

19 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: This property
20 obviously.

21 LISA KERSAVAGE: With this property?

22 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Yes, the one
23 that we're discussing right now, the Lakeman-
24 Cortelyou-Taylor House in Staten Island.

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LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, you know, we—like I said, we were quite judicious with the landmark site. We understand that this an operating business here. So we wanted to make sure that we weren't, you know—that we—that we were really just focused again on the Dutch House. So I think that was one issue. You know we had met with the—the owners' architect to discuss sort of more detailed architectural issues and, you know, our regulatory framework. You know, and I—and I and I would say that this building is in such a good state of—of repair that—and we didn't hear of any planned work to house. So, you know, there wasn't a specific concern about a specific project or plan here that would be in anyway impacted by landmark issues.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Okay, so you didn't necessarily—I mean you met—you know the owners and you had a conversation, but you didn't necessarily address their concerns is what I'm saying.

LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, I mean if you look at what we calendared--

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]
Yeah.

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LISA KERSAVAGE: --this is what the Commission designated on December 13th. That's--that seeks to address an owner's concern.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: You're saying more specifically focusing on the--

LISA KERSAVAGE: [interposing] The--you know, that this was--

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: --on--on the home itself.

LISA KERSAVAGE: --on the calendar--

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Got it.

LISA KERSAVAGE: --and this was what was designated.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Okay. Great and I'll reserve judgment until I hear from the owner. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Any other questions from our members. Seeing none? Thank you very much. [pause] Now, we will go to Item LU 582, which is in Council Member Lander's District. We want to vote. George? Oh, yes.

Yes, I'm the owner. George

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: [background comments]

So we have George Kirchoffer, owner of the house, to testify. Than you.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: One second. I'm not done with you. [pause] Will you please identify yourself, and then start.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: [off mic] Yeah, I am George Kirchoffer. I own the home. [on mic] I'm Kirchoffer. I'm the grandson of Xavier Kirchoffer who originally bought the house in the '20s. We've—I grew in that house. Since then we've made some—they've put some changes onto the house, which we removed in the 2000s and we restored that house back to its original shape and size, and we paid pretty close to a half a million dollars to do that, and we felt that it was a good investment because it belonged to the community, but at the same time, if it's landmarked we kind of lose our-our-our use of property per se, or-or control of it. It becomes landmarked and we have to go to them to do anything to change the windows, to change anything that we need as as-as a business to-to keep it viable as-and going. And we feel it would be kind of a constraint

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2 on us to—to have that done, and I think in the past
3 we've proved that we've gone out of our way to try
4 and restore that building to its original, and I
5 believe Landmarks agreed with us on—on that point.
6 We—we really did a nice job, and I think that
7 architects did a nice job on it to try an incorporate
8 it into the---into the building we have now as retail
9 space, which it's been there since 1927. So we're
10 going on 90 years, and we plan to keep going, and we
11 have a house, as a fact, adjoining property where we
12 live now and spend—you know, just walk back and forth
13 to work, which makes it convenient for us, and we
14 plan to keep that in the family because we have two
15 younger children that are now in the business. So
16 moving forward hopefully it stays—stays with us.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So thank you for the
18 efforts [pause] for the house. So what is the main—
19 the—the-why are you so against it, you know, for—for
20 landmarks since you're maintaining the house already?
21 So what is the main argument for you that you don't
22 want landmarking on the house?

23 GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: My main argument--

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [interposing] Is it
25 financial or--

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: is that I'm-I'm
afraid that they would not let me change windows or
change this or change that that may need-be needed
just to keep the house, you know, in a-in a viable
situation for business.

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Council
Member Matter, do you have a question?

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: When did your
family acquire the building?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I believe in 1927.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: 1927 and
obviously you've made restorations. You said the
latest was in 2001, you said?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I believe 2001

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And just-and just
give us a little bit more detail of the restoration
and-and the cost and the--

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Sure. At that time
we were-well, the building had been used as a-a
retail space as well. It has greenhouse additional
to it, and some retail space in the front where they
built-out towards Richmond Road and we had removed
all of that to bring back that original house the way
my grandfather built it-bought it in 1927. We felt

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that it was due to the community that—that it's a

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lovely home that we wanted to keep it that way and

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back to where it was knowing that it was historically

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relevant to—to Staten Island and being the person who

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live my whole life on Staten Island and probably the

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rest of it, I wanted to see, you know, give back to

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the community that has supported us all—over all

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these years.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And that great

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and—and you—I believe you said half a million.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: It was pretty close to

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half a million dollars when we did the work.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And the goal was

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not only to restore—to make the renovations, but to

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restore historical value to the house?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Exactly. We tried to

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bring it back to as—as close as we could to the

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original. We saved the stone that we could put the

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roof line according to the Landmarks architect that

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was originally in there. He had recommended certain

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things and—and we went by his guidelines.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And—and just—

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George, do you live in the area?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I live right behind
the house on the adjoining property on Allison Place.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And so do-do you
believe there's any value to have it landmarked or do
you think it's more of a burden?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: To me it would be
more of a burden. I mean I don't see how I could
keep better than it.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And I-and I-and I
agree and I want to thank you for-for your efforts
and for putting the community first and as long as
I've been in government you've always been great
neighbor on Richmond Road, and-and I want to thank
you for that and-and I'll end with-with this: We
have an owner who-who is committed to buildings, he's
committed to the community. He's already making the
repairs, already adding historical value back to the
way it was years ago and I-and I think the case is
that this house shouldn't be landmarked because of
the owner and his family and all the investments that
they've made in the past, and that they're committed
to making in the future. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Council
Member Reynoso.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you for—
for disclosure. I will be—I'm really relying heavily
on the testimony of Council Member Matteo when it
comes to this decision, but if you don't mind if I
continue in asking a few questions?

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: The—the house
was purchased by your family in 1927 give or takes?

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Yes, my grandfather,
uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Okay and then
alterations were made thereafter?

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Correct. They—they
started a business there a retail flower shop. So
they extended to the front and made like a showroom
keeping their house in the back where they living and
working at the same time, and then there was a
greenhouse added and some other alterations. In
2000–2001 we had all that taken off and put the
building back to where you see it today as—as close
to original as we could.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So, again, so in
1927 it was purchased by your—by your family?

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Correct.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Changes were
3 made that actually devalued the house's historical
4 significance, and then thanks to your hard work and
5 the money that you invested, it was able to restore
6 that version. Do you understand the concern that
7 members of the Council or Landmarks might have in the
8 long-term preservation of this property that even a
9 great family like yours that would come in and looks
10 to alter it for business purposes or whatever
11 purposes they have can take away from one of four
12 Dutch Colonial houses in all of Staten Island.
13 Understanding that maybe your—your children, your
14 grandchildren might think that there is more business
15 sense to expanding certain parts of it to taking down
16 windows, to modifying the door, to adding a sign.
17 All things that take away again from its historical
18 value, but might increase its business value on why
19 the Landmarks Commission might be thinking that this
20 is a thing, something that they should be pushing
21 forward even without—without you're—necessarily
22 you're buying? Do you understand? Value is the
23 logic behind that.

24 GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I understand where
25 they're coming from. That's—that's not a problem, but

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at the other side of the coin is-is, you know, my

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business is there and I have to survive--

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --pay taxes, you

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know--

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --move on. So I-I

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have to do that, but at that point we-we refer to

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that house as the Heritage House--

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --because to us it's-

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it's my heritage. I grew up in that house.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: My children were born

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in that house so, you know, it's-it's just--

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --carried on through

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the generations, and I would hope they would-would

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keep in--

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --in the family as I

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speak.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: You know, so I

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what--so I guess what we would be doing would be

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2 erring on the side of not hope, but guaranteeing
3 right? And that's just—it's just a tough one for us
4 when it comes to this type of situation. And then I
5 also want to say you've done a great job of being
6 able to use the recommendations that were given to
7 you or the guidelines that were given to you by
8 Landmarks already in modifying the roof, for example—
9 =

10 GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: --which is a
12 part of what--was that process a difficult process to
13 engage with landmarks in while you were redoing the
14 roof?

15 GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: It was more difficult
16 because of the shape of the roof. If you look at it,
17 it's-it's curved kind of to reflect the older version
18 of what the roof would look like today if it was done
19 back in the 1700s.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right, so-so
21 the-but the--the difficult part was more understanding
22 that the curved roof was more--

23 GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: [interposing] Well,
24 it was more costly. It cost us \$500,000 to do that
25 whole house.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: I know it, but
you—but you—dedicated yourself to making sure that
that--

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: [interposing] Well,
for my benefit it was—it was our heritage.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I mean I wanted to
keep that house because it was—it was part of our
family.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right. No, so I
guess my part is like the red tape. You know, we
hate regulations. We don't like red tape. We hate
bureaucracy. I want to know when you went through
with that process did any of that happen? Did you
have to wait and actually six months before you can
get information from the Landmark Commission
regarding the shape of the roof, the part that you
needed to use or when you asked for their help or
when they were offering the help did they come
readily to you? That's—that's kind of the
relationship I want to see that you had with
Landmarks?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I really had no relationship with Landmarks. The architect dealt with them directly so I--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing] I see.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --so I couldn't really say--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing] Okay.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --you know, how difficult it was from past experience? I don't know. I-I have had no real dealings with Landmarks--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Alright.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --other than paperwork saying, you know, we're going to--we're going to landmark your property.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right, right, which I know can be scary. So--so for me it's--it would be enlightening just to know what the relation between the architect and the Landmarks Commissioner because a lot of the folks that go through this landmarking process always talk about this onerous, burdensome process that exists by Landmarks. And I would just like to see someone that actually has been

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deterred from being able to make changes or that

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have—have been delayed through any work that needs to

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be done to a project because of Landmarks. I just

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really want to go through that testimony, but again

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I—I thank you for entertaining me--

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Oh, no problem.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: --first. Second

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great job in being able to maintain this house the

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way that you have. We thank you as a city for doing

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that, and again I am going to be pretty much basing

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how I vote on this on the recommendation of the local

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Council Member, which is Steven Matteo, but thank you

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so much for—for your time.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I appreciate you all

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listening to me.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Absolutely.

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You're welcome. [background comments]

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: Council Member

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Greenfield. Thank you, George. Thank you so much

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for coming out there today.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: No problem.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: --for your

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obvious love and deep care for this home. So just to

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understand a little bit more clearly currently

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there's—you still have your Family Florist on the
site or Moravian Florist?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Yes, Sir.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Which works out
of the—the building that we're discussing right now?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Well, the—the whole
area there is—is—there's a greenhouse behind in the
retail space to the left of it.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: That's great. So
your grandfather was a florist, right?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Right, he was a—more
of a—actually he was a landscaper.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing] A
landscaper.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: My grandmother
started with the flowers.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Okay, great and
they started selling out of this location as well?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Correct.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: So your family
has been there for 90 years or so?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: 90 years.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: And you're still
in the same business.

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Same business.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: That's pretty
impressive. That is very impressive. Okay, great
and so the--the Landmarks Preservation Commission they
told us a few minutes ago that they tried meeting
with you to try to discuss your concerns. Did they,
in fact, meet with you or your representative or--?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: They met with our
architect Mr. Rampulla.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Okay and they
said they tried to address your concerns by--by
limiting the application I guess to just piece of
property. Does that address your concern or not
really?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Well, it's still--
still dealing with Landmarks if I need to change
something or I'm going to change a door or change a
color or--or whatever, I'd have to first go through
them, get that process resolved, then go to the
Building Department.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: So you're not
satisfied with the resolution is what you're saying?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I'm not really happy
with it no.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Okay. I got
3 that, and in terms of—in terms of a little bit more
4 about the work you did in 2000, why did you do that
5 work? I mean nobody asked you to do the work. You
6 didn't have to do the work. It didn't come from
7 Landmarks Preservation Commission, right? So you did
8 it. You hired an architect. Why did you go through
9 such a hassle, quite frankly, and a fair amount of
10 money to renovate the structure?

11 GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Well, for us as I
12 mentioned it was—it's—we refer to it as the Heritage
13 House, because it's—it was the house that's been in
14 the family now 90 years. At that time it was
15 probably almost 70. I had a—I grew up in that house.
16 I spend 20 some odd years growing up in that house.
17 My brother grew up in that house and--

18 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing And
19 your family still lives in that house?

20 GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: No, we live-

21 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: You live
22 adjacent right next door?

23 GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: That's right.
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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: So what's in that--what's in that--what's in that space--space right now.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: It's office space.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Office space. Okay but you still live on the property.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: On the premises--

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Okay.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: --yeah we're on the same city block.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Do you have any plans of moving or selling or changing or anything like that or-

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: No.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: --you're planning on sticking around.

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I have two children that are in the business now. So I-I--hopefully they are going to continue--continue on.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: In the flower business?

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Do you also do landscaping or no?

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GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: No, no more
landscaping.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Just flowers?

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Just flowers.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Excellent. So
you were saying you did the work because it was
important to you to do the work?

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: I felt I owed the
community back something because they've--they've
taken care of my family all--over all these years,
and, you know, if I could restore this building so
that everybody could share in it, it would be the
proper thing to do.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: So your concern
really is about the difficulty of managing the
process with the Landmarks Preservation Commission--

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: [interposing]
Correct.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: --if you wanted
to make change, and they haven't been able to assure
you yet that that would be a simple or easy process?

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: No, well that's what
they claim, but I'm--I'm not really too sure that's
going to happen.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Fair enough.

3

Alright, George. I want to thank you for coming out

4

here today. I appreciate your testimony, and I

5

appreciate the work that your family has done into

6

this wonderful structure, and you've got a great

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advocate and Minority Leader Steve Matteo as well. So

8

thanks for coming out. We appreciate it.

9

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: No problem. Thank

10

you.

11

CHAIRPERSON KOO: So in seeing no other

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questions, thank you, George, too.

13

GEORGE KIRCHOFFER: Thank you. [pause]

14

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Now we have on the same

15

Land Use item yes, I see Simeon Bankoff, Tara Kelly

16

and Andrea Golden to testify. [background comments]

17

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Will you please

18

identify yourself and start. [background comments]

19

SIMEON BANKOFF: Good afternoon, Council

20

Simenon Bancroft Executive Director the Historic

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District Council. You're going to be hearing quite a

22

lot from me today. So I will keep it brief. It is

23

such a fantastic honor to actually be here testifying

24

after hearing the owner who has done such a wonderful

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job on the Lakeman House. It should come as no

1
2 surprise that the Historic District Council strongly
3 supports this designation. However, based on what
4 both-what Council Member Reynoso talked about and
5 what the Landmarks Commission talked about in its
6 equity-antiquity of the house, and it be one of the
7 only four Dutch-American Houses on-left on Staten
8 Island, and frankly also that the owner has done such
9 a wonderful job of keeping. We would like to just
10 sort of point out that it's been our experience
11 working around and with the Landmarks Commission that
12 in houses like this particularly the LPC has a very
13 light touch with regard to their regulation, but the
14 real purpose of it is actually really celebrate and
15 ensure its value as a home, and with the value as a
16 property not valued as property. So it's about
17 demolition and the-the future of this house forever.
18 That by designating it, this will keep-this will
19 enshrine the wonderful herit-heritage and all of the
20 hard work and-and investment that this owner has
21 given it. That's all.

22 TARA KELLY: Good morning, Council
23 Members. I'm Tara Kelly with the Municipal Art
24 Society. The Lakeman-Cortelyou-Taylor House is a
25 rare surviving example of a Dutch Colonial hose in

1
2 New Yorkers. Dating back to the 17th Century, it's
3 one of the oldest houses on Staten Island.
4 Documentation of the ownership of the property is
5 extremely detailed adding legitimacy to its can as a
6 C for landmark status. Perhaps its most notable
7 inhabitant was Aaron Cortelli, founder of the
8 Moravian Church on Staten Island and an important
9 figure in the Revolutionary War. The home is located
10 on former farmland along Richmond Road in Neudorf.
11 The structure is a two-story gambrel roof farm house
12 with a one-story gable roof wing. Its field stone
13 for the current roof line and small windows make it
14 particularly Dutch-American in style. Because of its
15 architectural and historic significance, the
16 Municipal Art Society believes that the Lakeman -
17 Cortelyou-Taylor House deserves to be designated a
18 landmark. Without protection, the loss of this
19 building can mean a significant loss in New York's
20 colonial heritage. And just to add to that and
21 further Simeon's point, an owner with the intention
22 of preserving their home or work fabulously well with
23 the Landmarks Commission. The sort of alterations
24 that he cited like changing doors, paint colors,
25 windows, these are things that Landmarks Commission

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does best. They have the best, you know, technical knowledge of these things, and all that—that they will do is help to continue to preserve this building with this great owner and steward, and then into future into perpetuity generations of his family or generations of some other family, but New Yorkers going on into perpetuity would be able to enjoy this really important history of Staten Island and New York City.

ANDREA GOLDEN: Good day Chair Koo, Chair Greenfield and Council Members. I'm Andrea Golden speaking for the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is pleased to support designation of the Lakeland House. It's extremely fortunate that the property is still here, somewhat altered by recognizably restored and in use as part of a florist business. The former farm house is built in two sections: The main wing, which is conjectured to be built between 1863 and 1714, and an 18th Century addition. One can still see irregular field stone walls at the first story of both sections. The end walls are carved in wood where they meet the picturesque gambrel roof of the main wing and the gabled roof addition. The Lake-Lakeman house is one

1
2 of the oldest on Staten Island and the city as a
3 whole—and as Council Member Reynoso mentioned, one of
4 the only four Dutch Colonials on Staten Island. The
5 Commission's documentation was a series of Dutch
6 owners going back to 1675. As a rare survivor an
7 example of the residents with ties to the 17th
8 Century Dutch Colonial period. The Landmarks
9 Conservancy supports designation of the Lakeman House
10 as an individual landmark. After hearing the
11 testimony today I'd like to add that we thank the
12 owner and his family for their stewardship,
13 restoration and maintenance of the property and offer
14 the Conservancy's financial and technical assistance
15 if the landmark designation is approved. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Any
17 questions?

18 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: I would—I would
19 just add that—thank you very much for your testimony.
20 I would just add that, you know, I would encourage
21 all of you to reach to the property owner to perhaps
22 help give him some of your perspective. Obviously
23 the owner has some concerns that have not been
24 addressed yet at this point by the Landmarks
25 Preservation Commission, and so maybe it would be

1
2 helpful if you reached out and tried to provide some
3 of your technical expertise, and yes, Simeon I'm not
4 surprised that you're in favor of this landmark for
5 the record.

6 SIMEON BANKOFF: Just get used to it.

7 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: We're used to it
8 by now. I'm still waiting for the—for the day that
9 will come that you'll be opposed. Although,
10 apparently the Landmark—New York Landmark Conservancy
11 is opposed to one of the landmarks here today, and
12 we're looking for some clarity on that a little—a
13 little later when we bring it up but thank you very
14 much for coming out and thank you for your testimony
15 and your advocacy today. [background comments]

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So now we will go to
17 Item LU 580 the Lowe's Theater and it's in Council
18 Member Rodriguez's district. [pause, background
19 comments] Council Member Rodriguez, do you want to
20 make a statement. Yeah, go ahead. Yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: First of all—
22 first of all, thank you Chair, and I also thank both
23 chairs for your leadership on this issue and many
24 other important issues. You know we almost, but I've
25 got to say shame on the Landmark for allowing one of

1
2 the buildings that we've been looking on the
3 possibility to landmark the one that was for in 184
4 to be tear down like a building 89 years old that we
5 brought to your attention. And we were clear to you
6 that we were open to have this conversation on the
7 landmark of the three buildings, and instead of
8 putting those three, two buildings in Landmark you
9 already know that there's a plan for the on 181st the
10 Palace Theater where developers already have a plan
11 of what that site will look like. And the second
12 option the one that was 184, that building is not
13 there any more the developer of the church saw this
14 building and there's a plan already for more, close
15 to 100 apartments there. So what is the two-way
16 level of communication when we're looking for
17 landmark opportunities in our district when one is
18 already—they've—they've planned for that building?
19 181st already there. We're looking for a—a potential
20 investor and the other one that building is not there
21 any more. We understand it. I'm not an expertise in
22 that field. I know that you're looking for
23 characteristics before you move any plan. But I
24 know that also you have all the flexibility to put a
25 building in calendar so that we can have discussions.

1
2 So for us to say and especially those two who care
3 and want to preserve especially—especially a
4 preservation group say we want to preserve. We want
5 to be help you—helpful to you from there. We cannot
6 work that building any more because that building was
7 there a few months ago, but it's not in our community
8 any more, and 89-years-old building. When it come to
9 the landmark, you know, I—I used to be a social study
10 teacher, so for me a father of 10 and 3-year-four
11 years old, I'm more than committed to preserve as
12 much for our future generation, and I also understand
13 that the owners they have—still have their voice. I
14 made—I've been listening loud and clear to the
15 members of my community. I know that they've been
16 speaking. I know how important is it to preserve
17 the—the—the—the United Palace. I met with the
18 Developer, with the owners. I met with his
19 leadership. I was clear to them. They say that they
20 had a plan. I don't have to put a lot of fancy
21 writing on how they can work with the local co-
22 transportation. I'm just waiting to be fair to them
23 for their plan, and again I've been listening to
24 other voices. I have not made a decision or if I—how
25 I will avoid him, but I can say that for me to

1
2 preserve the historical landmark in the community it
3 is important. At the same time I'm also trying to be
4 fair or been fair for all the buildings and the
5 owners who want it for that plan that they're working
6 on. I don't know if they will share with us, but I
7 wanted to—want to hear what is their plan before I
8 made my final decision. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [background comments]

10 Now we have our—our Borough President of Manhattan,
11 Gale Brewer. She wants to make a statement on behalf
12 of all items in Manhattan. [pause] Borough—yeah,
13 Borough President presenting by you certain style.
14 Thank you.

15 GALE BREWER: Gale Brewer, Manhattan

16 Borough President. I don't need to be sworn in?
17 [background comments] Oh. I am the borough
18 president. I am Gale Brewer and I thank you for the
19 opportunity to speak today in favor—

20 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing] In

21 this—in this chamber we trust Gale Brewer so your
22 swearing is unnecessary is not necessary.

23 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much— in

24 favor of individual landmark designations of the
25 Excelsior Steam Power Company Building, the Bergdorf

1
2 Goodman Building 412 East 85th Street the House and
3 Lowe's 175th Street Theater. These sites represent
4 the final four of the ten Manhattan backlogged items
5 that the Landmarks Preservation Commission had
6 prioritized for designation in 2016, and a they
7 completed an 18-month public process. This is a
8 fraction of what was originally on the LPC backlog
9 docket, which was comprised of over 90 sites that had
10 set on the designation calendar for five years or
11 more. In aggregate, the 27 sites citywide that the
12 LC has ultimately designated as part of the Backlog
13 Initiative was the subject of multiple rounds of
14 review by Commission staff, public hearings and
15 consideration at the LPC and City Planning
16 Commission. Today, I testify in support of the
17 Manhattan designations. This hearing represents the
18 completion of a great undertaking by the LPC and I
19 wish again to thank the LPC chair and all of the
20 staff. They took time to meet with us. They
21 listened. My recommendations that were incorporated
22 into the backlog process following months of
23 discussion with the landmark advocacy groups and
24 REBNY on how to address the backlog while respecting
25 prior efforts and remaining mindful that items should

1
2 not sit in limbo for decades. The recommendations
3 for transparency, borough focused hearings and a
4 fixed timeframe for public input allowed for robust
5 discussion of the backlog items. These four items
6 today have met a very high threshold for designation
7 and we should celebrate this work by affirming their
8 landmark status. I don't need to talk to you about
9 all the issues regarding the importance of the
10 Landmark Law, but protects the historic
11 neighborhoods, districts and exceptional buildings on
12 Manhattan from Tribeca all the way up to Harlem and
13 the Bronx. Without them, our borough would not be
14 well preserved order and aesthetically distant wish.
15 It is a mixture of old and new that makes it the
16 wonder of the world. Yeah, Brooklyn is okay, too,
17 but you know. [laughter] Thus, I want to
18 acknowledge the huge effort undertaken by the
19 commission in this process and its historical
20 oversight of the Landmarks law. It has been diligent
21 and resolved, and throughout the process. We should
22 be mindful that this effort reflects decades of work
23 by neighborhoods and advocates. Some of the sites
24 you are reviewing today may have been initiated up to
25 40 years ago. In November 2014, when the issue of

1
2 how to eliminate the backlog first arose, my staff
3 particular Bashas Gerhards who is Deputy Land Use
4 Director. She visited with staff every building on
5 the Manhattan backlog—backlog list based solely on
6 the exteriors. We believe that some of these are
7 true landmarks as well as beloved neighborhood gems
8 that are worthy of designation on architectural merit
9 and historical significance alone. Earlier in my
10 testimony to the LPC the Manhattan backlog hearing—
11 backlog hearing, I spoke on behalf of designation for
12 the Excelsior Power Company Building, the IRT Power
13 House on the West Side, Bergdorf Goodman, St.
14 Michael's Episcopal Church, St. Paul's Church and
15 Rectory, St. Joseph's and Lowe's 175th Street
16 Theater. Of today's Manhattan items the Lowe's
17 Theater at 175th Street also known as the United
18 Palace deserves special mention and has been a
19 priority of mine as borough president. It features a
20 breath taking interior and exterior. The good
21 condition of the structure is testament to current
22 management, but as we are all too aware, owners are
23 not forever and priorities change and without
24 landmark status we can lose the very sites and make
25 our neighborhoods special. This theater is among the

1
2 best examples of how the Landmarks is meant to
3 preserve neighborhood history. In addition, I
4 support designation of the Lowe's Theater because we
5 must have more landmarks in Norther Manhattan. We
6 have and should continue to pursue landmarking in
7 neighborhood that have traditionally overlooked, and
8 I want to also indicated that this particular theater
9 has the support of Community Board No. 12. I am
10 pleased today in summary to speak in favor
11 designating these four sites. All four sites have
12 community board support for designation. They have
13 been recognized by our city law-citywide landmarks
14 advocacy organization and per the City Planning
15 Commission Report do not conflict with zones. Thank
16 you to the Chair Greenfield who always has a sense of
17 humor, and Council Member Koo for holding this
18 hearing and proceeding with this important
19 designation process. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you Gale Brewer.
21 Thank.

22 GALE BREWER: Thank you. Thanks very
23 much and I have a copy of the Community Board
24 Resolution, but I think you do also. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: And how we have Heather
Shay from United Palace to testify. [background
comments, pause] Please identify yourself and start.
[background comments]

HEATHER SHEA: Heather Shea and I'm the
CEO of United Palace, and making a statement on
behalf of Xavier Eikerenkoetter, who is the President
of the United Palace. Our Church Inspirational
Ministries of the United Palace has been the steward
of the 175th Street Lowe's Theater United Palace
since Reverend Ike purchased it for his congregation
in 1969 when the building faced uncertain times. The
church has spent an enormous amount of money over the
years maintaining the Palace without government
support. In December, the Landmark Preservation
Commission, LPC, designated the United Palace as a
landmark over our objections. Now, any interior or
exterior work we do requires a permit from the
Department of Buildings. It will also trigger LPC
review even though only the exterior was landmarked.
After consulting a dozen previously landmarked
building uptown and around the city, we have affirmed
our understanding that the LPC review process adds
time and cost to renovation products-projects.

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2 Landmarks public and private describe the designation
3 as burdensome, complicated and annoying. This takes
4 away valuable resources from our programming we
5 provide now and continue to extend. Unlike some
6 other private buildings that can leverage a landmark
7 designation to increase public funding, as a building
8 it is owned by a religious organization. We will
9 continue to be ineligible for capital funding from
10 the city. We are touched by outpouring of concern
11 from public, from the supporters that fears the
12 Palace could someday be demolished or altered beyond
13 recognition. Contrary to what is circulated on line,
14 the building is not in danger, demolition is not
15 eminent and there are no plans for compromising the
16 architectural integrity of the exterior or selling
17 the building. We have cared for the palace for
18 nearly 50 years, and will continue to for the
19 foreseeable future. It is our legacy. We love this
20 building as much as you do. To guarantee its
21 preservation we offered to enter into a building
22 agreement with the city pledging our continued
23 fidelity of the buildings' historic character, and
24 requiring future owners to do the same. This will
25 save the building forever, which is the promise of

1
2 the LPC. What we do ask is that after 50 years of
3 the Church may preserve its rights to have full
4 control over its building in order to best continue
5 its mission of serving the community, which is why we
6 hope the City Council will rescind the landmark
7 designation. If you really want to help the United
8 Palace continue to flourish, then there's our
9 programs and events. As the message on the building
10 has stated decades, Come on in or smile as you pass.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you

13 HEATHER SHEA: And we also handed out
14 copies of our movie program for this calendar. What's
15 important to know is that we have an ongoing movie
16 series. We do education for the community. You'll
17 also see an event on the other side that was
18 sponsored by Councilman Rodriguez and the community,
19 and we are also a regular ongoing church. In fact,
20 I'm one of the reverends. So come on in on Sunday at
21 noon. So that's ongoing as well. So it's a very
22 active community building.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Next we
24 have Mike Fitelson from the United Palace and going
25 to testify. Please identify yourself, sir.

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MIKE FITELSON: Right. My name is Mike Fitelson. I can't hear anything. Is this on? Okay. My name is Mike Fitelson. I'm the Executive Director of the United Palace of Cultural Arts. We're a non-profit arts and cultural center that has been located inside the United Palace for the past five years. In some ways that makes us the largest tenant of the Palace. We run the Arts and Cultural programs. We run the movie series, we run the dance series, which brings Ballet Hispanico there next weekend, and we do the after school arts programs for children to El Sistema youth inspired orchestras, West African drumming, to visual arts and an afterschool program that was homegrown. These are programs that are very, very rare in Northern Manhattan, Washington Heights and Inwood, and it's something that was begun by Xavier, he's the son of Reverend Ike-Eikerenkoetter, by the way, because this is how he wants to help give back to the community. These are the programs that he saw missing, and this fits in with the mission that since the day the building was created the first day the doors opened was February 12, 1930, the idea that anybody who walks into this building interior should feel like royalty. They

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2 should have the cares of their day-to-day lives melt
3 away and engage in the opportunity to dream and be
4 inspired to become whatever you want to be. We know
5 that that's what—how everyone feels about the
6 building and I think that we're all in agreement that
7 the building needs to continue to stand and to serve
8 as such. But speaking from the—the tenant side, from
9 the program side of the building I know that Xavier
10 has long pledged that this is his legacy. This is
11 his family. This is what is going to be left behind,
12 and after this ongoing conversation about what's
13 going to be the fate of the United Palate and hearing
14 all the fears that are in the community that
15 something is going to happen to the building, he has
16 moved to the point where he would be—I'm sure I can
17 say happy to—but he would sign any MOU any agreement,
18 any legal binding agreement with the city that would
19 ensure that nothing is going to happen to the
20 building under his watch, and when it comes time for
21 the family to sell the building, to move on, it will
22 be opened up for landmark designation. It will saved
23 in perpetuity. It will have all of the guarantees of
24 the landmark designation. The one question that I
25 have is why everyone keeps referring to the Lowe's

1
2 175th Theater, which pretty much hasn't functioned in
3 nearly 50 years. The building at Broadway and 175th
4 Street is the United Palace, and it has been saved as
5 such and preserved as such by the Eikerenkoetter
6 family.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Seeing no-
8 oh, Chair Greenfield. Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Thank you very
10 much. First of all, [coughs] I really appreciate you
11 coming out here today, and I'm very excited about
12 these movies. I'm definitely going to go see a
13 movie-

14 HEATHER SHEA: [interposing] Right.

15 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: --in the
16 theater. I'm trying to decide whether it should be
17 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs or the Sound of
18 Music, but I'll get back to you on that. How much
19 are the tickets, by the way?

20 MIKE FITELSON: They're usually online \$5
21 for children and \$10 for adults.

22 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: That's great.

23 MIKE FITELSON: We also have a season
24 pass if you're interested.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Well, I live—I live in Brooklyn. It's really far away. Let's not push our luck here--

MIKE FITELSON: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: --but certainly I'm gong to come and check it out, and I'm—I'm very excited about that. The answer to your question, by the way, of why we refer to it as the Lowe's 175th Street is because when we refer to landmark items, we always refer to it by the original or the original designation. It's just the practice still to say Lowe's 175th and now the United Palace, and that's just standard. I mean personally I just want to be sure that you understand that. It goes back—it goes back to every—every landmark. So example the landmark we just discussed in Staten Island is the Cortelyou, which predates the original owner and the developer which was the Cortelyou family as well. So I just want you to understand why it's being referred to that way.

MIKE FITELSON: Understood. I had believed that some of the issue here has been that the Eikerenkoetter family is a bit private, and they feel that there is an encroachment on the stewardship

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2 that they provided and—and things like referring to
3 it as the 175th Street—Lowe's 175th Street Theater
4 it's sort of, you know, erasing 40 years or 50 years
5 of history.

6 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Sure.

7 MIKE FITELSON: So there—there is a
8 personal issue that's coming from the owner's side.

9 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Got it. I just
10 want to assure you that's not the case, and if you
11 can take the message back to the family so they
12 should know there is certainly no affront intended.
13 This is the way we generally deal with all Landmark
14 items. We refer to the original property whoever it
15 may be, but you should note that in the official
16 designation report that we have from the Landmarks
17 Preservation Commission there are several paragraphs
18 indicating, in fact, the—the work of Reverend
19 Frederick Joseph Eiken—Eikerenkoetter, II, know as
20 Reverend Ike who renamed it the United Palace, and
21 the history of what happened since then. So it is
22 duly noted. I just—I just want to make sure that you
23 understand that it's certainly not meant to be an
24 affront in any way shape or form. So I guess my—my
25 question is this: So the—the—goes back to my

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2 original question that I asked of the last property
3 owner in Staten Island. Have you sat down with the
4 Landmarks Commission and tried to engage in some sort
5 of conversation to see whether there is some sort of
6 middle road because it seems like on the one hand
7 you're saying you're willing to sign to some sort of
8 MOU, right, but you're not willing to have the
9 designation. I'm not sure quite frankly there's a
10 huge distinction between what an MOU would look like
11 versus the designation. So I'm trying to understand
12 (a) what it is that you're apprehensive about, and
13 (b) also understand what it is that you haven't
14 gotten, that comfort level from the Landmarks
15 Preservation Commission.

16 HEATHER SHEA: Right, so as I understand
17 because we have, Xavier has sat down--

18 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]
19 Right.

20 HEATHER SHEA: --and our concern still is
21 that even though we've heard it won't be that
22 burdensome from other organizations, in that--indeed
23 it is burdensome if we want to do work, which we
24 don't have right now in terms of actually making the
25 changes, submitting the applications when the family

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2 and the organization and the church has been
3 maintaining to the point even with the movies coming
4 up we go back to if you come to the show, you'll see
5 that we have a show as well. We were reshowing--

6 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]
7 I'm going to be there.

8 HEATHER SHEA: --and celebrating the
9 organ.

10 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Do you have air
11 conditioning in the--in the summer? Okay, I'll be
12 showing up. Yeah.

13 HEATHER SHEA: We are--we are keeping it
14 the--according to the legacy. So there is a feeling
15 of why would we want to change that? Why do we want
16 to put any additional financial burden because we use
17 financing that we have to support the programming and
18 support the community right now? And it is so
19 important especially in Washington Heights in our
20 area to use the funds and to spend that time--and the
21 time. I mean the time that it's going to take us
22 working with Landmarks towards taking care of the
23 community and the children.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: The negative,
3 which is important, which as a religious non-profit,
4 you don't quality for capital funding from the city.

5 HEATHER SHEA: That's correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: It's a fair
7 point. So, my question then I guess is item—I hear
8 you on a question, Item A. I guess that's call—but
9 Item b, so what do you see as the distinction, and
10 certainly I think we should continue the
11 conversation, but what do you see as the distinction
12 between this MOU that you're proposing, and certainly
13 we appreciate and recognize it, and I think it's a
14 sign of good faith that you want to, in fact, keep
15 the—and just to be clear, I have no reason to believe
16 that you don't want to keep intact. Your—your
17 congregation has owned this since the '70s and
18 obviously keeping active is something to indicate
19 that you are, in fact, going to sell this, but you're
20 willing to show that extra sign of good faith.
21 Within that MOU what—what are you concerned about the
22 difference between what we would call the MOU versus
23 the actual designation?

24 MIKE FITELSON: I—I think that there's
25 two issues on the table. The first one is an MOU,

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and apologies. I'm speaking for Xavier who couldn't

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be here today. He's traveling. I'm going to

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interpret as best I can, that the biggest concern is

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look to the--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Xavier is who

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again?

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MIKE FITELSON: Xavier is Reverend Ike's

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son--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Okay, and--

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MIKE FITELSON: --Xavier Eikerenkoetter,

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and he's the--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Got it.

14

MIKE FITELSON: --and he's the--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]

16

He's also a reverend?

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MIKE FITELSON: Yes, he's a spiritual

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leader of the church--

19

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Okay.

20

MIKE FITELSON: --and he's also the-the

21

one who founded the Arts and Cultural Center.

22

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Got it. Okay,

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and he's the leader currently of the church?

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MIKE FITELSON: Correct, and-and he's the

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President of the Board of Trustees--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]

Got it.

MIKE FITELSON: --that oversees the building. There's sort of three years that we're working through here.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Great.

MIKE FITELSON: Okay, the part of it is what we talked--what we listened and hear about before was the red tape and the regulation in the sense of losing, you know, a personal control over a space and over the building, which is a very for Xavier tangible thing. This is something that has stood the test of time because his family intervened. When his father passed away in 2009, Reverend Ike, Xavier became the steward of the building and is very sensitive about being the one whose maintaining this, and has to be to be the person who's going to carry this forward to the next generation. So I think that symbolically, metaphorically, personally the idea of now having to have an overseer any time he wants to do something to the exterior of the building, and I repeat there are no plans for the exterior of the building. That he now has to submit to the--you know, the government oversight is a bitter pill to swallow,

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and there are concerns that anything that needs to be done on the exterior--there's terracotta, there's windows, there's doors is now going to have to go through a Landmark process. And we've had some cursory conversation that I have heard from. I haven't sat down at the table with LPC. That some decisions can be done at the staff level and some need to be, you know, kicked for higher review. There's definite concerns that that is going to add time and cost, and I think it's just because nobody quite knows what the plan might be. Nobody quite knows what that additional responsibility is going to entail.

HEATHER SHEA: The--other thing I found out is that we are a full city block in Northern Manhattan. It is a very large building. Any building permit that we ask for has to go through landmarking. So they say it is exterior, but it really relates to all of our building permits, and so that also becomes cumbersome when you're working on a very large building and trying to maintain as a functioning, performing, educational and art center.

MIKE FITELSON: And spiritual.

HEATHER SHEA: And spiritual Center.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Go it. So-so
your concern, if I can just summarize, it's basically
it's control a quasi sort of church-state separation
as well, and then

MIKE FITELSON: It would the 81-A (sic)
yes.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Yes, and then—
and then the—the—the concern of the logistics of what
it would actually entail to go through that process
if you did want to make some changes.

MIKE FITELSON: And then I guess the
process, the interview question up is just doing an
MOU would say the building is not going anywhere.
It's not going to be destroyed. We're not going to
do any major architectural renovations.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]
You're, again, what you do-what you're willing to do
is you're willing to sort of do some sort of middle
ground, which says we're not going to touch. We're—
we're not destroying this building. Don't worry, but
still give us the freedom to make the tweaks that we
need on the inside and the outside for the building
based on our judgment and based on the fact that to
be fair you did preserve this building for the 40

1
2 plus years, and to be perfectly frank I'll recognize
3 as well to do the economics I think we all know the
4 economics of feeders. This building probably
5 wouldn't be standing but for the fact that Reverend
6 Ike and his family decided to come in and to invest
7 in it and to—to maintain it as well. So I certainly
8 want—I think there is recognition. We hear you.
9 We're going to take it under advisement certainly
10 with the local council member, and we thank you for
11 your testimony today.

12 HEATHER SHEA: Thank you. Thank you very
13 much.

14 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: And I'll see
15 either in March or May for the showing of the movie.
16 I can't attend—I can't attend Ballet Hispanico
17 because it's on a Saturday, but I can do the Sunday
18 one. So thanks.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Council Barron—Council
20 Member Barron has a question. [pause]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
22 Chair. I'm quite familiar with the work of Reverend
23 Ike having grown up during that time, and knowing of
24 the great spiritual work, which conducted from that
25 edifice, and the building is, of course—of course a

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beautiful building. So in your testimony you say,

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"Now any interior or exterior work that we do

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requires a permit." So even though it's inside the

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building and not affecting the exterior, you've got

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to get the permit and the LPC review?

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MIKE FITELSON: Yes, that's my

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understanding from them.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

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MIKE FITELSON: The Council.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And then are

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there electives that have taken a position on whether

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or not they should be landmarked? Do you know?

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Could you share with us who they are, who oppose the

15

landmarking?

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MIKE FITELSON: I believe as we stated

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earlier today Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez is

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still considering which way to vote on this.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, and the

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former council member was Council Member Inez Dickens

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I believe.

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COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [off mic]

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COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [off mic] It

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was Robert Jackson.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Robert Jackson.

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MIKE FITELSON: Yes, Robert Jackson
before.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay before.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [off mic]
Sorry, no, he was not—he was not. Sorry, Jackson he
was not. (sic)

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Sorry.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [on mic] This
has never been Council Member Jackson's district.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, that's what
I'm asking.

MIKE FITELSON: Yep, you're right. Yeah,
we're opposite side of Broadway.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, so whose
district is that?

MIKE FITELSON: It's—it's Council Member
Rodriguez's district.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And so you're
looking to see were there other electives that took a
position on this landmarking?

MIKE FITELSON: Yes, Congressman Rangel
took a position on this in opposition.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Opposition?

MIKE FITELSON: Several years ago and--

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] And
does he still--well he--he's still here. So what I--

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MIKE FITELSON: [interposing] I--I don't--I
don't believe Congressman Espaillat has weighed in on
it one way or another.

7

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. So we
don't have, but Congressman Rangel when he was
representing the district he opposed it?

10

MIKE FITELSON: Correct.

11

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, thank you.

12

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Thank you. I
just want to clarify with the Director because it's
just--if I may, Mr. Chairman.

15

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Sure.

16

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Thank you. Just
for the record that the--the--just related to the
Council Member's question is that the landmarking
would be on the exterior but the not the interior of--
of the building. So that--that.

21

HEATHER SHEA: Yes, that--that is correct,
and what we were informed by the committee was that
even if we wanted to do something internally it would
have to be run by and approved by Landmarks, and that

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1
2 was when we were informed that by counsel at the
3 Landmark Commission.

4 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: So we—we—we're
5 not of that belief. So we should clarify this point
6 before we move on. Traditionally we don't actually
7 landmark the interior of religious buildings, which
8 this is a religious building. So just—we'll have to
9 clarify it. We don't—we don't have to go back and
10 forth now, but we'll clarify that issue because it's
11 understanding that it would only apply to the
12 exterior and not to the interior and that just might
13 give me more of a measure of comfort as well. So why
14 don't we clarify that issue offline.

15 HEATHER SHEA: [interposing] And—and the
16 issue—the issue was the exterior is the landmark, but
17 if there's a building permit interior that it would
18 also have to be reviewed. So that was a—a little bit
19 of the--the fine line there.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: We'll clarify
22 that issue for you. So thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Would the Landmark
24 Commission would come to clarify this?

25 We can do that now or just--

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2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Right now, please,
3 yeah, go ahead. [background comments, pause]

4 LISA KERSAVAGE: Alright. So Lauren will
5 talk about this as well, but just—

6 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Please identify
7 yourselves again for the record.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah.

9 LISA KERSAVAGE: Thank you. Thank you.
10 Lisa Kersavage, the Landmarks Preservation
11 Commission.

12 LAUREN GEORGE: And I'm Lauren George,
13 Landmarks Preservation Commission.

14 LISA KERSAVAGE: So yes, correct. This
15 designation, which would only be the exterior of the
16 building, but so because we never regulate or
17 designate interior spaces of religious institutions
18 so any interior alterations that are being proposed
19 by the applicant would be reviewed by an expedited
20 Certificate of No Effect, which is a two-day process.
21 So there is the review, but it's a two-day turnaround
22 time and doesn't—it's really a signoff that the
23 Department of Buildings requires.

24 LAUREN GEORGE: And the review is just to
25 ensure that it actually is not an exterior piece of

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2 work because its interior pieces like HVAC systems or
3 things that actually manifest themselves on the
4 exterior. So that's a limited review.

5 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: So just to be
6 clear so anything—if you review it and we want to
7 make any changes at all, if we want to make the
8 interior and we see that, and it's the most offensive
9 change in the world, I'm saying or suggesting that
10 they would it. I just want the record to reflect
11 that you would still sign off of it and you'd say
12 okay this is an anterior—

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: --challenge.

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: We would regulate the--

16 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]
17 You're only looking at it to make sure that it
18 doesn't impact the exterior?

19 LISA KERSAVAGE: Exterior. Like if there
20 is a masonry reopening or some kind of change that
21 would occur.

22 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Got it.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, thanks. You have
24 a question?

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HEATHER SHEA: I just—I want to say and—
and that I appreciate the clarification and also even
though they say it takes two days in terms of the
filing, the setting it up, and the time is again for
us time and money that we can be putting towards
other things, and again because of the large building
we do have a number of things internal in the
internal facilities. So, thank you.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So just a
question. How often does it occur that someone
thinks that what they're doing is, in fact, limited
to the interior but has an impact on the exterior?

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LISA KERSAVAGE: I—I don't have the
statistics here, you know, to give you a full picture
but it's very rare that those permits become anything
else. So they're expedited because the plans are—are
proposed and it's really a basic review and signoff.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay if--
LISA KERSAVAGE: [interposing] It's very,
very fast.

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23

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --that I would
appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: So thank you very much.
Thank you. Now we go to the next panel, which Andrea

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2 Golden, Tara Kelly, Simeon Bankoff, and Mendez Ducat
3 (sp?) [background comments, pause]

4 SIMEON BANKOFF: Good afternoon, Council
5 Members. Simeon Bankoff, Historic Districts Council.
6 It's such a pleasure actually to be able to testify
7 following such owners that really have such a great
8 history of commitment to these historic buildings.
9 We are in support of this designation. It saddens me
10 that we've now heard from two owners who very much
11 care for their buildings, yet feel that landmarking
12 is an onerous situation that really we feel it's not,
13 and we feel that actually this is a way of government
14 ensuring and rewarding stewardship, and not actually
15 causing a burden. As was mentioned earlier, they
16 should in—in return for submitting LPC oversight,
17 owners gain the benefit of an expert staff well
18 skilled in working on historic buildings, which
19 amounts to gaining free construction and building
20 consultants. The Landmark staff works very closely
21 with building owners and prides themselves on their
22 user friendliness. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

24 ANDREA GOLDEN: Good day, Chair Koo,
25 Chair Greenfield and Council Members. I'm Andrea

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2 Golden speaking for the Landmarks Conservancy. The
3 Conservancy is pleased to support designation of the
4 former Lowe's 175th Street Theater, United Palace as
5 an individual landmark. This building is the finest
6 remaining example of the work for renowned Theater
7 Architect Thomas Lamb. It is one of three
8 extravagantly decorated movie houses Lamb designed
9 for the Lowe's chain. The other two, the former
10 Lowe's Canal Street Theater and the former Regent
11 Theater, now First Corinthian Baptist Church, have
12 both been designated individual landmarks. The
13 building from 1932 is an elaborate freestanding
14 theater built to be seen from all sides. It exceeds
15 the other Lowe's landmarks as it's both more ornate
16 with profuse and exuberant terracotta ornament and at
17 all four facades and more intact retaining marquis
18 and vertical signage. It draws inspiration in its
19 ornament from Moorish, Spain, Hindu and British
20 Thailand. The United Christian Evangel-Evangelistic
21 Association, which remained the building the United
22 Palace has been a very good steward, as we've heard,
23 since purchasing the property in 1969 preserving it
24 intact with the minor addition of a corner cupula at
25 the building's northwest corner. But there is no

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2 doubt that this architectural master work should be
3 designated a New York City landmark. The Conservancy
4 has a long history of working with the owners of
5 historic religious properties. We recognize the
6 difficulties that congregation can face in addressing
7 routine maintenance of extraordinary buildings
8 especially in light of critical mission needs. For
9 over 30 years our Sacred Sits Program has made
10 approximately 1,400 grants totaling \$9.6 million to
11 750 congregations. The size of the grants varied
12 [bell] from very small up to \$100,000. Funds can be
13 used for consultant, master plans, structural
14 improvements or restoration work. The grants don't
15 necessarily address all of the congregation's needs,
16 but can be the wellspring for phased work, larger
17 projects and can inspire additional funding. Program
18 grants have leveraged \$615 million in restoration
19 expenditures, and our funding is not just a check in
20 the mail. Grants always come with assistance from
21 our professional staff, which can provide answers to
22 technical questions, referred to skill contractors
23 who have experience with religious properties, or
24 long-term hands-on project management. In addition,
25 we've worked with congregations to convert LPC

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2 designations to listing on the state and national
3 registers of historic places, which can access state
4 grants of up to \$500,000. Our staff has been in
5 communication with Council Member Rodriguez's staff,
6 and we would be happy to meet with representative of
7 the church to discuss this kind of assistance and the
8 services we could offer following a designation.

9 Thank you.

10 TERRY KELLY: Good afternoon, Council
11 Members. I'm Tara Kelly with the Municipal Art
12 Society of New York. In 1970, the Municipal Art
13 Society testified in favor of the designation of the
14 Lowe's 175th Street Theater and now United Palace.
15 "This marvelous Moorish palace, of course, was an
16 architectural and cultural landmark, a reminder as
17 AIA---AIA guide to New York State of those days when
18 Hollywood ruled the world and everyone went to the
19 movies on Saturday night. This highly flamboyant
20 architectural style of which New York has no
21 preserved example is just beginning to be appreciated
22 by new generations of architecture students. I only
23 hope this appreciation has not come too late to
24 preserve this outstanding example. This statement
25 was offered by other than--none other than James

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Marston Fitch among the founders of the Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation at Columbia University whom Jane Jacobs considered the principal character in making a preservation of historic buildings practical and feasible and popular. Furthermore, the Lowe's 175th Theater now United Palace was designed by famed theater architect Thomas Lamb. Credited with at least 21 theaters in Manhattan and hundreds elsewhere only a few of Lambs' designs survive in New York. His landmark theaters include the Court and the RKO Keith's in Flushing. Once again, MAS upholds its prior position that the Lowe's 100 Street Theater now the United Palace should be designated an individual New York City landmark. And so I'll add to what my colleagues have said and what I said previously any owners that has an intention towards preservation will have no trouble with the LPC. In addition, a National Register listing could result in state and federal tax credits that can syndicated. So if being a church or a religious situation is no problem. Air rights can be sold to an expanded area allowing again for an increased income, and other private grants

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2 like the Landmarks' Conservancy program are available
3 to help to preserve the building. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, next.

5 VIVIAN DUCAS: Hi. My name is Vivian
6 Ducas, and I've been a member of the Land Use
7 Committee for Community Board 12, Manhattan for over
8 10 years. I'm an active member in my community of
9 Washington Heights where I've lived for 13 years. I
10 live in a landmarked apartment building in Washington
11 Heights, of which there are very few, and we have
12 been working with Landmarks in exterior renovations
13 and have not found it to be onerous. The Lowe's
14 175th Street is an important symbol of the community.
15 The landmarks designation will increase positive
16 attention to our community and will help improve our
17 community's profile or bring tourism, which is
18 desired. This is an opportunity we should not lose.
19 It does not make sense to trade away the heritage of
20 the community for the United Palace's promises of
21 more community activities, which they should anyway
22 provide as any neighborhood institution should
23 provide if they are good community members.

24 Community Board 12 Manhattan voted twice in recent
25 years to support the designation of the Lowe's

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2 Theater. From my testimony I'll be reading some
3 short excerpts some very salient paragraphs from our
4 most recent resolution, which was passed on January
5 24, 2017. The Lowe's 175th Street is a magnificent
6 master piece designed by noted theater architect
7 Thomas Lamb, perhaps his most extravagant design.
8 Council Member Rodriguez and now the City Council
9 should not be guided by the opposition to designation
10 expressed by the owner. The owner's opposition
11 reflects a misunderstanding of the impacts of
12 designation, mischaracterizes the impacts of landmark
13 designation, perpetuates the myth that landmark
14 designation is a burdensome and expensive, and it
15 ascribes to designation costs more accurate
16 associated with keeping the property in a state of
17 good repair and protecting public health and safety.
18 LPC has no authority to require repairs or
19 renovations to a designated property the owner
20 otherwise does not plan to perform. New York City's
21 landmarks laws are among the strongest in the county,
22 and does not require owners to consent. Owners—the
23 consent, recognizing that providing for the
24 permanence of architectural treasures like the Lowe's
25 creates a public good that far outweighs the short-

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2 term interest of an individual owner. The 175th
3 Street is part of the City's great history and
4 culture and a beloved neighborhood feature, indeed
5 already an unofficial landmark. This has Depression
6 Era weary movie goers, religious congregations, local
7 youth and a wide range of other audiences. It is an
8 architecturally distinguished building designed by a
9 master theater architect that merits designation that
10 must be honored and preserved for our children, our
11 grandchildren, and their children and just—it was
12 resolved and this is—this is excerpts upon excerpts.
13 Community Board 12 Manhattan reaffirms its support
14 for the designation of the Lowe's 175th Street
15 Theater. As an individually landmarked building,
16 strongly urge Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez's
17 support without reservation or conditions of the
18 Landmarks Designation Commission designation, and be
19 it further resolved that Community Board 12 Manhattan
20 also urges Council Member Rodriguez to support the
21 various resolutions it has passed requesting that
22 Landmarks Preservation Commission consider historic
23 designation of buildings and districts in Washington
24 Heights and Inwood and to undertake separate from any
25 consideration of the Lowe's 175th Street Theater a

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2 campaign and advocacy formed among them—around them
3 and any other buildings and/or districts that he is
4 interested in being acknowledged with designation.
5 Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Chair Greenfield.

7 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Thank you very
8 much. I want to thank all of you for your testimony.
9 I actually just want to note that it's been around
10 two hours since we started. I want to thank all of
11 my Brooklyn law students who are in attendance and
12 invite them to leave if they'd like. I'll see them
13 Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. back in the law school. Thank
14 you for your patience. Of course, you're welcome to
15 stay, but you're certainly no longer required to for
16 credit purposes. I do—I do I want to thank all of
17 you for your testimony. I do once again I want to
18 invite you to reach out because I think what you're
19 seeing and hearing over here is that there obviously
20 is a different perspective, right, the owners
21 certainly believe. And it's something that I would
22 invite the Landmarks Preservation Commission to work
23 on as well, and I know that they're working on this
24 issue globally, but to be fair, there is still—there
25 is still some hesitancy from folks who don't want

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2 their property to be designated because they think it
3 is a very burdensome process for them to try to work
4 though that. And so to the extent that you folks are
5 the experts, the non-profit well, I would encourage
6 you to reach out to the owners and the
7 representatives we're seeing here today, and try to
8 see what you can offer them whether it would be just
9 moral support. In any case, I think you mentioned
10 there might be some financial support. So certainly
11 I think that would be helpful. To your point, Vivian
12 I want to thank you for your service in the Community
13 Board. I also serve in Community Board 12, but in
14 Brooklyn, New York, and I just want to point out
15 that—that just something that you said just to
16 correct the record from what I heard at least, it
17 doesn't seem like their argument is that they're
18 going to—that they're going to give more community
19 activities. Their argument is that they're saying
20 that they will, in fact, preserve the building just
21 under a different standard, which is an MOU standard.
22 I'm not looking for a back and forth, but you
23 mentioned something I just think just to be fair—just
24 to be fair to the United Palace, they—they were very
25 clear here today that weren't interested in trying to

1
2 preserve. They just were uncomfortable with the—with
3 the landmark designation.

4 VIVIAN DUCAS: They were saying that it
5 would take away from their ability to provide these
6 programs, and the point is that they should be
7 providing these programs and it's questionable
8 whether this a way for--

9 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing] I
10 don't—I don't think it's fair for us, just to be
11 fair, Vivian, this isn't within the scope of—of what
12 we do here in the—in the subcommittee or the
13 committee, which is to tell non-profit organizations
14 or religious organizations what kind of programs they
15 should or shouldn't provide. I think if we—we limit
16 our inquiry to the designation of the landmarks there
17 is certainly very good reasons to landmark this
18 building obviously, but I do want to reflect to be
19 fair to the owners of the United Palace that they
20 seem to be amenable to some sort of preservation.
21 It's not necessarily exactly what we're looking for
22 and I think we're trying to find that, and I—I just
23 don't think we should conflate the two. That's all.
24 I just to be fair—to be fair to them as well. It
25 seems like they've been good stewards or the United

1
2 Palace since they acquired it in the early 1970s. So
3 I want to thank you all once again for your testimony
4 and for being consistently in favor of landmarks.
5 Thank you Simone for not throwing us off our game,
6 although I'm looking forward to that day. It-it will
7 come. The day will come Simone when-when you
8 surprise me, but it's not the day. So thank you very
9 much.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay thank you. Now we
11 go to the next panel. We have Pat Courtney, Michael
12 Henry Adams, and Sarah Fisher. [pause] Please
13 identify yourself and-and start. Yes. [pause]

14 PAT COURTNEY: Hi, I'm Pat Courtney and
15 I'm coming to you as a representative of a
16 neighborhood group from Inwood called Inwood
17 Preservation. I've been a resident of Inwood for 14
18 years. This will be a letter to Council Member Koo
19 and the members of the committee including Ydanis-
20 Council Ydanis Rodriguez. Inwood Preservation, a
21 group of almost 500 who support preservation of our
22 community values including landmarking our historic
23 structures, are writing to ask that you join with
24 Inwood Washington Heights community to
25 enthusiastically support the designation of the

1
2 Lowe's 175th Street Theater or United Palace as a
3 landmark. Since—since it is the pride and joy of the
4 neighborhood, and an integral part of the cultural
5 life of the community, it needs permanent protection
6 that can only be conferred by landmark status so that
7 it can be enjoyed in celebration—and celebrated by
8 generations to come. This building is one of the
9 great architectural and historical gems of the area,
10 and is a huge cultural and economic asset for the
11 entire Upper Manhattan community. In the words of
12 Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator of the Hamilton, There is
13 not other theater like the United Palace in New York
14 City or around the world really. This theater is
15 special. It is breathtaking. You don't just come
16 and sit and watch a movie here. You are transported.
17 The full moving going experiences always leaves me
18 mesmerized. This is from the Landmarks Designation
19 Report, 28-page report, which has already been
20 published, and I would ask that you consult that
21 report in making your decisions because it covers
22 many issues. Even though the remarkable nature of
23 the United Palace is universally recognized, it too
24 more than 45 years for the LPC to give it
25 consideration, the consideration it merits. The

1
2 Commission originally held a hearing on the proposed
3 designation of the theater on February 3, 1970, but
4 it was not until December 13, 2016 that it advanced
5 through that process. We thank Council Rodriguez for
6 his public comments highlighting the gross negligence
7 of the city in its failure to recognize uptown
8 landmarks. This neglect is a continuation of
9 systematic disregard for a community's physical
10 neighborhoods and cultural institutions of Upper
11 Manhattan. The designation of the United Palace
12 Theater represents an opportunity to turn the page on
13 this historic negligence, resetting the
14 neighborhood's relationship with the commission so
15 that our landmarks get protection they deserve. This
16 long overdue and hard fought designation should be
17 celebrated, but it should—it should also be built
18 upon so that the cultural richness of our
19 neighborhood can be preserved for future generations.
20 Please act to ensure this precious community asset
21 retains permanent protection, encouraging further
22 interest in preserving our most wonderful community.
23 And that's signed by Maggie Clark who is a co-founder
24 of Inwood Preservation. I also just have to state as
25 a side comment that I find it kind of astonishing

1
2 that the owners find this such a difficult process,
3 because they already apply to the Department of
4 Buildings and the DSA for such changes, and in at
5 least the case of the interior renovations they would
6 merely need to copy the Landmarks Commission. So it
7 seems bizarre to me that there is such a hardship
8 claimed.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

10 MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Good afternoon City
11 Council Members. My name is Michael Henry Adams, and
12 I'm a found of Save Harlem Now a preservation
13 advocacy group, which was started because if you look
14 at a place like Harlem, only 3.6% of the buildings
15 there are protected by landmarking compared to
16 Greenwich Village where two-thirds of the buildings
17 are protected by landmarking. This disparity of
18 landmarking in communities of color is dramatic.
19 There are even fewer protected landmarks in
20 Washington Heights or Inwood, and this is very, very
21 wrong. Here we are at the end of Black History
22 Month. Reverend Ike follows in the tradition of
23 these mega clergymen who are part of Harlem's history
24 and people like Father Divine, and it absolutely is
25 true that but for the intervention of Reverend Ike

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2 this building might not have been saved. It might
3 have been altered. It might have been destroyed, but
4 I'm here to say that you know that when you look at
5 history no one is all good, no one is all bad that
6 Reverend Ike and his church may do many good things,
7 but I am reminded of the testimony of the former
8 Chief of Staff of Council Member Stanley Michaels who
9 formerly represented this district, and Steve Simon
10 at the Community Board 12 was talking about the
11 United Palace Church and the way they exploited the
12 poor people of color who lived in this community.
13 And I wondered what he meant, and he suggested to
14 people that they go and look at the website of the
15 United Palace Church. They sell little prayer
16 cloths, which supposedly were blessed by Reverend Ike
17 before he died for like \$10 a piece. And then I
18 suggest you go on and you look at the lavish
19 lifestyle the Reverend Ike and his family lived and
20 continue to live.

21 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]
22 Just to be fair--

23 MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Where does that
24 money come from? [background comments] That is very
25 important when you look at what it is with this

1
2 community, what is happening to this community vis-à-
3 vis this church, and, therefore, to have the church
4 talk about [background comments] how oh, well, we
5 intend to save the building. We intended to do
6 everything right. We just don't want you to hold us
7 to it. Well, why do we have government?

8 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]

9 Sir-sir--

10 MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Why do we have the
11 Landmarks--why do we have a landmarks--

12 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Sir, sir--

13 MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: --why do we have a
14 landmarks--

15 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Sir, sir--

16 MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Yes?

17 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: That's not fair.
18 I'm just going to talk to you for a moment. This is
19 not the appropriate--it really is not the appropriate
20 venue because we're not prepared. We haven't asked
21 the applicant about that. It's not the appropriate
22 venue to engage on any sort of criticism or attack on
23 any sort of institution whether they be non-profit or
24 religious or otherwise. It's not the purpose of this
25 hearing. It's really not. Honestly, it's not fair,

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and so I'm going to ask you respectfully to limit

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your remarks to dealing with the landmarking issues

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over here today. Because haven't given them the

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opportunity to respond. We're not going to just get

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into informal--

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MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: [interposing] Yes,

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well I--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: --he said, she

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said.

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MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: --I-I-I--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: There are many

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people who believe that they do outstanding work. We

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just heard from a Council--a Council Member who said

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that she has recognized the work that they've done.

16

So, I'm going to ask you to either conclude your

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remarks and focus--

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MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: I intend to take

19

the position--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]

21

Let me just finish please.

22

MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: -- where we focus on

23

the landmarking--

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]

25

Let me just finish, please.

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MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: --on the

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landmarking issues of it.

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CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: [interposing]

5

Please focus on the landmarks issues or please

6

conclude your testimony.

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MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Alright, I'm

8

concluding my testimony.

9

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Thank you.

10

MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: My--the conclusion

11

of my testimony is this: Why do we have government?

12

Why do we have a landmarks law? To protect the

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heritage and culture of all of the people of our city

14

and but for those laws, they might be lost forever.

15

There are people in this city, in this world who

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believe that they are unfairly encumbered fire codes,

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by building codes. There are people who feel that

18

they should not have to vaccinate their children.

19

But government has been formed in order to safeguard

20

the public, and in terms of landmarking, our

21

communities in Upper Manhattan have no landmarking to

22

speak of. This is a building which people anywhere

23

from the world of any age can look at and say this is

24

a landmark. St. Patrick's Cathedral is landmarked,

25

the Abyssinian Baptist Church is landmarked. This

1
2 building should be landmarked as well. Thank you
3 very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: Thank you.

5 SARAH FISHER: [off mic] Okay, I don't
6 have it—is it on?

7 CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: You accidentally
8 turned it off. If the red light is on, then we can
9 hear you.

10 SARAH FISHER: Okay, thank you for the
11 opportunity to testify. Hi, name is Sarah Fisher.
12 I'm a resident to Inwood in Northern Manhattan, and I
13 want to thank the Landmarks Preservation for their
14 unanimous vote. I think it was the right way to go.
15 I want to thank Gal Brewer, and I want to thank my
16 Council Members Ydanis Rodriguez for keeping an open
17 mind because I know he's going to make the right
18 decision. I think the issues are three. We've
19 talked about preservation equity. I'm—I've lived
20 Inwood for almost four years. I moved for—from the
21 West Village. I was struck by how beautiful it was
22 and how much history there was, and I was also
23 shocked that the only building—there was one building
24 in my neighborhood that was landmarked, which is the
25 oldest farm house on the Island of Manhattan, which

1
2 is the Dyckman Farm House, and then four lamp posts
3 were listed as landmarked, but I think two of them
4 have disappeared. So I think that we have to keep
5 that in mind because it's—it's really important. The
6 second is cultural equity. The United Palace is one—
7 maybe the only real cultural and performing arts
8 based that we have in Norther Manhattan, and so when
9 I get scared by the disappearing—the only other place
10 we have is, of course, performing outside in the
11 park, which I would like, but the weather is not
12 always nice, but I think we really have to look at
13 the limited assets that we have, and this is one of
14 our most beautiful assets, and I think we should
15 protect it. The—I don't think I have any other—in
16 fact, we do have one other asset, which is our
17 library in Inwood and the library in Washington
18 Heights, but the Inwood Libraries right now are at
19 risk. And the final point that I want to make is I
20 think it is important. I've been to all the hearings
21 at the community board, and I will tell you and—and I
22 listened to the landmarks, too, and I think that the
23 United Palace has a point because when I went to land
24 use meetings, even though I agreed with them, the—the
25 landmark property feels like they're being yelled at.

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And I don't see the community board advocating for the city to give monies for performing—for the kinds of programs they produce. It's not that they—they have to do. It's that they are doing it in the communities to support it, and in the same way I would encourage Landmarks to—when they're working with—everyone will say to a building that's being considered for a landmark, and it should be landmarked like the Palace, they say oh, there are all these grants available, but no one tells them where the grants are. No one comes to them and says here are the grants. This is how you apply it, and the United Palace of Cultural Arts there are three people working there. This is not the Brooklyn Academy. You know, this is not BAM.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: [interposing] Please—
please conclude or not.

SARAH FISHER: Okay, the—the other thing I would want to say, I think that the really important thing though is—is the history that we need to preserve beyond the current owner. I remember one of the days that struck me the most I—I volunteered at United Palace as they showed their first movie. The day that struck me the most was when Rita Moreno

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came in. They were showing West Side Story. Her jaw dropped. I want her jaw he—my son's jaw to drop and his grandchildren to drop in the same way. I think that we have to preserve it for history. Reverend Ike has been a tenant for only part of the life of that institution, and I don't think just as the other owner, I don't think that he has the right to control the history that's going to be around for my grandchildren to see. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you very much,
Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
Chair. I just want to put onto the record my
statement also that we're not here to talk about the
character of people who are the tenants of these—of
these landmarking sites requests, and I do believe
that we should refrain from doing that. We don't
want to—

MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: [off mic]
[interposing] That would be good. I mean what you
do, Council Member?

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I think that they
should--

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: [interposing] Well,
it's part of--(sic)

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --refrain from
that, and I made a comment to address you, sir, that
I know of the work that was done. I did not
disparage anybody. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: [off mic] I think
you—they know of anybody's character.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Well, thank you. Yeah.

MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: You just go on
line. If that suggests otherwise, that would seem be
just as valid, council member. It would seem
logical.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: David, I think we've
had enough.

CHAIRPERSON GREENFIELD: This panel is
dismissed. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. [pause]

MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Carlo Marengo is a
personal friend who's taken financial contributions
from Reverend Ike.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Now we go to Item No.
LU 574, which is in Council Member Reynoso's
district. We have Simeon Bankoff and Tara Kelly who

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2 will testify. [background comments, pause] There is
3 a time limit, a time limitation. Please conclude you
4 remarks in two minutes each, each person. Okay.

5 SIMEON BANKOFF: Easy to do.

6 CLERK: Yes.

7 SIMEON BANKOFF: Simeon Bankoff, Historic
8 Districts Council. I would like to actually take a
9 moment of my two minutes to first off thank Council—I
10 should have done this earlier—thank Manhattan Borough
11 President Gale Brewer for all of her helpful
12 leadership and guidance on this entire Backlog 95
13 Initiative, and also to thank the Landmarks
14 Preservation Commission and the Council for getting
15 this all together. As I had at the time, nobody
16 likes a backlog. We would have preferred to have
17 seen more of the properties under question come to a—
18 to a better conclusion in online, but still this is,
19 I think, a good example of government working forward
20 and also to thank Council Member Greenfield for his
21 clarity, particularly at this hearing, on certain
22 issues. It's greatly appreciated. The—the property
23 in question was according to the late Margot Gayle,
24 the premier advocate for cast iron architecture in
25 New York the 183 Broadway Building is the finest

1
2 surrounding cast iron building in Brooklyn. In 1979
3 when this building was first submitted for evaluation
4 with LPC, Margot wrote that the recent losses of two
5 other significant cast iron buildings in Brooklyn
6 made the preservation of even greater importance.
7 Today, more than 35 years later the building has
8 fortunately survived without landmark designation.
9 Fortuitously, nonetheless, it remains important to
10 designate this prop—this property to ensure its
11 future survival. Thank you.

12 TARA KELLY: Good afternoon, Council
13 Members. I'm Tara Kelly with the Municipal Arts
14 Society. Originally commissioned by James R. Sparrow
15 as factory for the Sparrow Shoe Company, the building
16 at 183-195 Broadway is one of the finest surviving
17 examples of cast iron architecture in Brooklyn.
18 Designed by Architect William B. Ditmars, the
19 Building's well preserved façade features a calla
20 lily ornament, pilasters with reef decorations and
21 stylized drapery. The elegant nature inspired motifs
22 and delicate commons harken—columns harken to the
23 aesthetic movement while the blasted cornice and
24 Greek key freeze (sic) [coughing] reference the
25 popular Neo Greek style. Few cast buildings survive

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in Brooklyn and only one cast iron in Williamsburg,
the Smith, Gray and Company Building at 103 Broadway
is protected by individual landmark status. After the
Civil War, Broadway became an important commercial
thoroughfare in Williamsburg. At the west end of
Broadway was the ferry to Manhattan and numerous
industrial buildings were constructed along the
street in response to the growth of the area as a
central hub in Brooklyn. Since the building was
calendared in 1986, the Williamsburg neighborhood has
seen rapid change in development resulting in the
demolition of a number of areas of historic
buildings. 183-195 Broadway is one of the few
buildings along the western end of Broadway, which
remains in pristine condition and thus should be
protected. The well executed aesthetic movement
details and remarkably intact façade of 183-195
Broadway make this building stand out amongst other
cast iron buildings in the city. In addition, the
building represents the growth and commercial history
of Williamsburg. This building alone has been the
home of numerous companies since its construction.
For these architectural and historic reasons MAS

1
2 believes that 183-195 Broadway is deserving of
3 individual landmark status. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [off mic] Council
5 Member Reynoso.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you both
7 for your testimony. I obviously support this
8 landmarking 100%. It's a gorgeous building. It's
9 also like we said in 103 we have another cast iron
10 building. We also have the savings bank, the
11 Williamsburg Savings Bank, which has also been
12 restored on the corner and it looks amazing. We have
13 another that I will maybe a cultural historical
14 landmark, which is Peter Luger across the street.
15 This is a—in—especially in communities of color and
16 communities outside of Manhattan landmarking happens
17 very rarely. So when it does come into my district,
18 I try my best to be as supportive as possible. So,
19 ditto on all the statements made by both of the
20 organizations. Thank you so much for your support,
21 and hopefully we will move this along as soon as
22 possible because it has 35 years in waiting other
23 than me. So I'm happy to know that it's going to
24 happen. Thank you very much.

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. [pause]

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Now, we're going to move to Item No. 7, which is--no

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[bell] item no. 4, which is LU 581, the Protes--the

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Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing also

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known as the Browne Street Community Church.

7

[background comments, pause] So we have--

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[background comments] We have Simeon Bankoff, Andrea

9

Golden and the Tara Kelly. You're next. Yeah.

10

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: If your name was

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called, please come up.

12

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah. [background

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comments, pause] Will you please limit your remarks

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in two minutes on the issue?

15

SIMEON BANKOFF: Council Members, Simeon

16

Bankoff, Historic Districts Council. The Browne

17

Street Community Church stands out as a shining star

18

in Flushing, a neighborhood that experienced much

19

change over the years. Flushing does not have a

20

designated Historic District and only a relatively

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few number individual landmarks. Among them two

22

other notable religious institutions the Friends

23

Meeting House and St. George's Episcopal Church.

24

When this church was proposed as a landmark in 2002,

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followed by its calendar in 2003, the designation had

1
2 overwhelming support of local elected officials,
3 community groups and the Flushing community with a
4 large number of petition signatures. Unfortunately
5 the designation did not move forward at that time due
6 to the opposition of—of the then management of the
7 church. We understand this has changed thanks to
8 outreach efforts from advocates, the Landmarks
9 Preservation Commission, Council Member Koo, and for
10 that, we are extremely thankful. The church was
11 originally built from the Reformed Dutch Church of
12 Flushing, a congregation established in 1842 of a
13 bell up above (sic), Tiffany windows. It should be
14 noted that the landmark designation does not include
15 the parking lot or eastern annex. This landmark
16 designation is tightly fitted to allow for no undue
17 encumbrances on development—potential development on
18 the site. This is a very thoughtful designation,
19 which protects the central character of this
20 remarkable Flushing landmark. We urge the City
21 Council to support this designation. We also would
22 like to thank the Landmarks Preservation Commission
23 for their extensive research into the patrimony of
24 this church, the church building as it is—is the
25 original church building.

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TARA KELLY: Good after. I'm Tara Kelly with the Municipal Arts Society. This stately church was originally the reformed Dutch Church of Flushing with denom-denomination roots dating back to the founding of New Netherland as a Dutch colony in the 17th Century. The first congregation to call this building home was founded in 1842. To accommodate its rapid growth, the congregation borrowed money from the Collegiate Church of Manhattan, bought the property in 1873 and began construction on the present day structure in 1891. It is located on the north-northeast corner of Roosevelt Avenue and Browne Street near Browne enshrined in itself to religious liberty. The church was most likely designed by George A. Potter an architect from Massachusetts. It invokes Boston Architect H.H. Richardson's take on Romanesque Revival, a style that was popular for churches during the latter half of the 19th Century. With a commanding corner tower striking white brick and strong façade and above all, stained glass windows from Louis Comfort Tiffany Glass Company in nearby Corona, the Browne Street Community Church is one of the most impressive sacred structures in all of Queens. August Fairchild-Northrop, a member of

1
2 the congregation and well regarded designer at
3 Tiffany personally designed the windows. Today the
4 building is associated with several denominations
5 including the Reformed Church of America, United
6 Church of Christ, Taiwanese Zion Christian Church and
7 the New York Year-Round Church. This multi-
8 denominational environment continues to represent the
9 decree of religious tolerance first declared in the
10 Flushing Remonstrance of 1657. The Municipal Arts
11 Society firmly believes this church is of
12 extraordinary architectural quality and cultural
13 significance and merits designation as an individual
14 landmark. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Next.

16 ANDREA GOLDEN: Good day, Chair—good day
17 Chair Koo and commissioners and Chair Greenfield.
18 I'm Andrea Golden speaking for the Landmarks
19 Conservancy. The conservancy is pleased to support
20 designation of the Brown Street Community Church as
21 an individual landmark for its architecture and for
22 its connections to Queens' history. We thank elected
23 officials who have supported this designation, the
24 Landmarks Commission for bringing this item forward
25 after a long term on the calendar, and the

1
2 congregation that's maintained it. This handsome
3 church was designed and built in 1891 and '92. A
4 book in the Eagle an article from August 1981,
5 announcing clowns from the new church described the
6 location as perhaps the best site in Flushing for a
7 church. He façades are distinguished by decorative
8 brickwork and unglazed terracotta trim. One of the
9 most prominent features is the series of Tiffany
10 stained glass windows designed by Agnes Northrop, a
11 lifelong member of the congregation and artist at
12 Tiffany Studios. The Queen Historical Society noted
13 that upon completion this Romanesque Revival building
14 with its bell tower and elegant brickwork was held as
15 one of the most beautiful churches on Long Island.
16 In addition to this architectural significance the
17 prominent corner tower has long been a neighborhood
18 landmark. Today the structure is quite intact and
19 well deserving of designation. We understand there's
20 been a question as to whether the entire building is
21 original. Last summer our staff investigated this
22 issue and based on our archival research and visual
23 inspections confirms that the original church
24 building includes the entire west elevation along
25 Browne Avenue. The same material, details and

1
2 construction methods are present throughout the
3 building, which is noted on multiple historic fire
4 insurance maps dating to 1892. A letter confirming
5 this investigation is attached to the full testimony.
6 In previous testimony I alluded to the Landmarks
7 Conservancy's financial and technical assistance
8 programs especially our sacred sites program. So I
9 won't go into detail. In the testimony it's all in
10 the written material. We've also met with members of
11 the congregation and members like Suzanne in the
12 Council Member staff to talk about the designation,
13 it's potential impact and services we can provide.
14 We fully support this designation and thank you for
15 the opportunity to present the Conservancy's views.
16 [bell]

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Yeah, the
18 next panel is Dr. Ken Chan, Aaron Chan, Teresa Lopez,
19 and Ashira Bonitas. [background comments, pause]

20 DR. KEN CHAN: Thank you, Chairman.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah,

22 DR. KEN CHAN: Thank you, Council
23 Members.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Please identify
25 yourself and start, yeah.

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DR. KEN CHAN: Thank you, Councilman and
Councilwoman and all friends. I'm Dr.--

CHAIRPERSON KOO: But please identify
yourself.

DR. KEN CHAN: Yeah, I'm Dr. Ken Chan--

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah.

DR. KEN CHAN: --and currently a
governing board member of the church. I'm also
President of the neighborhood residential building.
I am also Chairman of Flushing Residential Building
Association. Those are all volunteer jobs. [laughs]
I live two blocks. I live two blocks away from this
church for more than 20 years. I make a living as a
senior economist and a senior bank examiner.
However, I still am willing to wait for more than
three hours to speak because I think that is very
important to our church. That's very important to
our-designation. (sic) We have our congregation
representative here, seven people. We have our
senior pastor here to speak out. Let me speak first
because I spent--I know this history of this issue
very well. Seven years ago near 2003, I was the
Governing Board Chairman of this church. At that
time all the newspapers, English newspaper, Mandarin

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2 all the newspapers reported over this issue, with-of
3 course with our-our pictures and the Councilman and
4 together we-we work together with the Historical
5 society, worked together with them, and then when
6 they are on this so long to try to push for landmark.
7 It's not a landmark committee. That's we tried very
8 hard at that path. Now, we almost achieved that if
9 you come out, somebody. Landmarks Committee stopped
10 maybe. Tried to push to an extension that we are
11 building of that member expanse. Why that's-that-
12 that-that's incorrect. That's unreasonable. We-we
13 all know the right thing if you're extended one line
14 ahead it may become incorrect. The reasonable thing
15 if you extend the one step ahead, may become
16 unreasonable. That's just based on our judgment,
17 based on fact. What is fact? We know when we
18 landmark something, landmark a building based on
19 historical value. Last thing we-we told to bury it.
20 [bell] We have our century. We have our tower a
21 building a long time ago. We love that very much.
22 We saw all the beautiful Tiffany windows. That's why
23 we want to preserve that. We keep pushing for so
24 many years. Now almost achieved that, issue come up
25 that we are building, that you are building. We have

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2 our several past the office there. We have our
3 social room there, our English ministry, and there.
4 We are content. We have our church contained—the
5 entire Alcoholic AA. We have Teachers (sic) Society,
6 we have all of PS 20 teachers. We support them using
7 our church facilities. However, that building we
8 invite everybody to go to there. Totally different,
9 and that building the tower last century is very
10 beautiful, and we will hear any reasonable discourse
11 who want to result that. However, from that building
12 not any Tiffany windows. All is very contemporary
13 building. It you go there you saw that's very plain
14 windows. Then somebody point out see there is a
15 worm. (sic) So among so many windows, second story,
16 first story only one. I say that's exactly the
17 evidence left over of the 30 or 40 that case later
18 they built that real building.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. Dr. Ken Chan,
20 can you conclude?

21 DR. KEN CHAN: Yeah, yeah, I can
22 conclude. I—we have documents. If you want we have
23 old history, very old documents, proof that two-story
24 building that is and has no historic—historical
25 value, we have proof that Landmarks has a committee

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2 only based on similar-similar material. That's
3 based-that-that-that let's support. I could have
4 more subfloors.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay.

6 DR. KEN CHAN: I'll tell you what, our
7 conclusion is yes, our church, our congregation.
8 That congregation is our church facilities, own them,
9 right, and our community we have 500 members, and we-
10 we are living in this community so many 20, 30
11 years. I don't know who come off saying, you know,
12 we impress (sic) you. We are this community. Church
13 congregation, community. We all support I think
14 support landmarks last century and the tower
15 building. We're strongly against that real building.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, we get it. Yeah.

17 DR. KEN CHAN: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Pastor.

19 AARON CHIN: Okay, thank you. My name is
20 Aaron Chin the Senior Pastor at Browne Street
21 Community Church, right now, and it's our honor to be
22 landmarked, this church. It means we have more of
23 the responsibility or a burden to maintain that
24 building. We understand it will cost us much more to
25 throw it. As a pastor, my job is to display the

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gospel as right now we have no activity in—for the—
our community. We have opportunity to tell people
about God's love. Most of our members are new
immigrants and they work very hard. So, we don't
accept—we—we just accept only the century where the
landmark number is 10 to the inmates of Fellowship
Hall class learned, Sunday School learned as the
document it was built at a different year and not at
the same time as it—it's my opinion. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Yeah.

Next, yeah.

ASHIRA BONITAS: Okay, good afternoon.

My name is Ashira Bonitas, and I'm a member of the
church, and I've been going to the church since I was
about five years old. So I do have a personal
investment in the church. [coughs] I also work for
one of the Historic Hotels of America so I do have a
love for the idea of what it means to have something
that's historical. I also went to the School for
Design and have a huge love for architecture and in
that I appreciate our church. I think some of the
main concerns from us as a congregation considering
we're not that large of a congregation, and we don't
have the financial support to do simple things in our

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2 church. Just for our congregants as a whole is how
3 will we financially be able to support this
4 landmarking. So the issues that we have or at least
5 from my behalf are what are the financial obligations
6 of us as church members? What types of grants
7 specifically are we eligible for and will cover this?
8 Because we barely have enough to maintain the church
9 as it stands on its own, and if you add this
10 responsibility to the church of landmarking, it's
11 bigger than what we're saying. I understand that
12 there's a big push in Flushing for there to be a big
13 tourism coming, and going to our Chamber of Commerce.
14 So with that being said, how is that going to affect
15 our security of the church? Simple things like
16 needed air conditioning, it is an old church. How is
17 this landmarking going to affect the fact that we
18 need air conditioning? You can barely breathe--and
19 I'm asthmatic--sitting in church in the summertime.
20 There's just simpler things that need to be addressed
21 in a more broader base. I do think that the church
22 needs to be preserved. That's very important, but I
23 think the context in terms of what kind of control we
24 have over the church is important for us to know
25 before we go forward on how much of an expansion for

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2 landmarking is considered to be part of this church.
3 I was listening to the information that they were
4 talking about for the United Palace for the MOU
5 Program and I think that that would probably be
6 something that would be in the best interest of our
7 church saying yes definitely landmark the part that's
8 the sanctuary. It is historical. It's beautiful.
9 It's an asset to the community, but even mentioning
10 those [bell] Tiffany glass windows I remember ten
11 years go giving to the church in donation for Tiffany
12 glass windows. There's only so much that can be
13 done. We don't even have people that are physically
14 capable of doing that kind of work any more, licensed
15 in good parts of New York City and the amounts of
16 money that it cost to maintain them is more than all
17 of our windows combined. It's like \$50,000 and
18 better. Who is skilled enough to do that, and where
19 are we going to find that money when we can barely
20 feed ourselves?

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. So--[background
22 comments]

23 ASHIRA BONITAS: So my conclusion is just
24 that if—I feel like it needs to be done to maintain
25 the church, but I believe there needs to be

1
2 provisions that the church has some control over how
3 it's done. I agree with him in saying that the
4 exterior part that's not part of our main sanctuary
5 should not be part of this plan. So go forward—well
6 go forward and give us the control, and give us the
7 financial support because we will not be able to
8 maintain the church otherwise.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yep.

10 ASHIRA BONITAS: [off mic] You do have
11 meetings there with us.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: We had meetings with
13 the church and the conservancy before. So we had
14 talked about those are brands. There's applications
15 before. So—so if they church's position now is you
16 want them at the sanctuary part, not at the rear
17 portion of the church, right?

18 DR. KEN CHAN: That's—that's like-like
19 here because we believe the Sanctuary has historical
20 value. Everybody love it. We want to preserve that,
21 but for the rear building it has no historic value so
22 any that's a fact. So we are against it.

23 [background comments]

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah. Please identify—
if you want to speak, please identify yourself and
we'll give her a slip.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: She did.

JOAN MACARTHUR: [off mic] My name—yeah,
I did.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Oh, okay. Okay.

JOAN MACARTHUR: [on mic] Hello, good
afternoon. My name is Joan MacArthur and I live two
doors away from the church, and I have been living in
Flushing since 1975, and I just have a short text
here that I'd like to read. I'm in favor of
landmarking of the property of the Protestant
Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing currently known as
the Browne Street Community Church. Because of the
efforts to demolish the building in 2000 and 2003
that was scary. The downtown Flushing neighborhood
has changed immensely. What is of nostalgic and
historic value to some, is not necessarily important
to the New York gentry occupying the neighborhood.
If the burning or for that matter the property is not
protected through land—landmarking, capitalism may
prompt the desire to convert this beautiful and
irreplaceable building and for that matter the

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2 property to more multi-use property, and develop
3 plans in the neighborhood. I am still unclear about
4 the pros and cons, all of the pros and cons of
5 handling of—of landmarking the building, but my—my
6 colleague and friend here, Ashira, alluded to that,
7 what we have to lose, what we have to gain. That's
8 all I wanted to say. I just want the building to
9 continue the way it is. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Now we have the next
11 panel. Hilda Regier, and Shirley Ray. [background
12 comments] No? Oh, Sonya Shirley? [background
13 comments] And Hilda. Okay. [background comments]

14 HILDA REGIER: I'm Hilda Regier,
15 President of the Victorian Society of New York. The
16 Victorian Society of New York enthusiastically
17 supports the designation of the Browne Street
18 Community Church in Flushing as an individual
19 landmark. [coughs] Built in 1891 to '92, it is an
20 imposing Romanesque Revival structure. The
21 exterior's intricate brickwork is embellished with
22 terracotta. A four-sided steeple caps the bell
23 tower. Over time, stained glass windows were added
24 to the church, a total of 24 punctuate the sanctuary
25 in pairs, 12 on each side of sanctuary. Closer to

1
2 the parishioners in the pews are large stained glass
3 windows at least four of which were designed by Agnes
4 Northrop, a long time parishioner. She worked as a
5 designer for the Louis Comfort Tiffany from 1884 to
6 1936. Research by Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen of the
7 Metropolitan Museum of Art has revealed that with a
8 few possible exceptions all of the full and
9 landscaped windows produced by Tiffany were designed
10 by Northrop. One of those in the Browne Street
11 Church is dedicated to the memory of her father Allen
12 Parkhill-Northrop who served as an elder of the
13 congregation from 1864 until his death in 1903. The
14 design of this window installed in 1905 is commonly
15 called the tree of life. The first of her windows in
16 the church unveiled in 1899 is a memorial to Robert
17 Baker who was associated with two of Flushing's
18 largest nurseries. It features a profusion of
19 blossoms. Her last window in the sanctuary created
20 in memory of Reverend Thomas Hannah McKenzie after
21 his death in 19-1938 [bell] was made by Westminster
22 Studios a firm a begun after Tiffany's closure by
23 some of its former employees.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [off mic] Please try to
25 wrap it up. (sic)

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2 HILDA REGIER: Okay. The Reformed Church
3 of Flushing was organized in 1842. You've—you've
4 heard all of this, but I would just like to say that
5 in 1974, the two—two congregations reunited to become
6 the Browne Street Community Church, and in 1988 at a
7 time when this congregation that had been meeting in
8 the building, officially joined the merged church.
9 Reflecting on the ethnic diversity of its community,
10 the church today offer separate services in English,
11 Taiwanese, Mandarin and Spanish, and has a cost
12 sharing arrangement with a Korean congregation.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. [pause]
14 Again, do more public members want to testify on this
15 item? Seeing none, I will go to the next item. We
16 will go to the [background comments, pause]. Now we
17 will go to LU 578, which is in Council Member Kallos'
18 district. [pause] We have Rachel Levy, and Simone
19 Bankoff and also Tara Kelly, but before you guys
20 testify Council Member Kallos wants to make a
21 statement.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you, Chair
23 Koo for your leadership on landmarks. The folks who
24 are testifying can grab a seat and get comfortable.
25 That's fine. So I just want to thank the Landmarks

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2 Committee members who have been here through a long
3 hearing, and the good news is the controversies are
4 over. So I just want to thank the—my colleagues who
5 serve on this committee. Community Board 8, which
6 has already voted in favor of this, the leaders at
7 Friends of Upper East Side Historic District for
8 their leadership in my district, and in the larger
9 city, and I ask that all of you please vote in favor
10 of landmarking 412 East 85th Street. It is one of
11 six frame buildings left on the Upper East Side,
12 sharing this distinction with the Mayor's residence
13 of Gracie Mansion. The land on which the home sits
14 once belonged to the farm of Yelles Hopper in the mid
15 19th Century when the Yorkville neighborhood began as
16 a rural junction of the Boston Post Road running
17 along what is today Third Avenue and the Hellgate
18 Ferry Road, which is intersected at 86th Street has
19 become a central artery to our community. The
20 building was constructed about five years before the
21 1867 fire code banned wood framing in the district.
22 Since this time the community has grown denser,
23 modern and become a destination connected with
24 greater public transportation. So please if you
25 would will join me in voting in favor of this, it's

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2 the little wooden house that could in my district,
3 and I quite enjoy walking past it when I'm in the
4 district, and urge all of you to please come and join
5 us.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Council
7 Member Kallos, and we start the public and test-
8 testimony. Council Member.

9 RACHEL LEVY: Good afternoon. My name is
10 Rachel Levy. I'm the Executive Director of Friends
11 of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, and I'm
12 her today representing our enthusiastic support for
13 the designation of 412 East 85th Street as an
14 individual landmark. 412 East 85th Street is a rare
15 surviving example of a wooden clapboard building in
16 the Yorkville neighborhood of Manhattan. As Council
17 Member Kallos said, the residence is one of only six
18 wood frame houses on the Upper East Side, and it's
19 the only one, which remains unprotected. The owners
20 have been careful stewards of the building restoring
21 it to its 1916 appearance according to the earliest
22 and most complete existing photographs. The
23 structure first appeared on the property in 1861,
24 five years before the City Fire Code outlawed wood
25 frame construction south of 86th Street. Italianette

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2 details of the building reflect architectural styles
3 of the 1850s to the 1960s when carpenter builders
4 constructed frame houses using patterns as guides.
5 Like many landmarked buildings over 100 to 200 years
6 old, 412 East 85th Street retains a mix of historic
7 fabric and historically appropriate new material,
8 which helps to support its architectural integrity.
9 The presence of 412 East 85th Street on the street
10 speaks to the outstanding sense of history embodied
11 by this structure, one of the rare mid-19th Century
12 wood frame survivors in all of Manhattan. Its careful
13 restoration by loving stewards has preserved its
14 integrity and designation that allows for LPC
15 oversight over future restoration of the building and
16 would secure the future of this building of a beacon
17 of Yorkville's history and as rare gem in our
18 neighborhood far into the future. Thank you.

19 TARA KELLY: Good afternoon. I'm Tara
20 Kelly with the Municipal Art Society. A three-story
21 wood frame building 412 East 85th Street was first
22 documented as a single-family residence on this site
23 in 1861. By the end of the 19th Century it operated
24 as an apartment house with a showroom for J. Hearst &
25 Sons modeling granite monuments on the ground floor.

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2 The building underwent its first restoration campaign
3 in the 1950s when it was purchased by a Dr. Douglas
4 Torrey. Although the next owners support-owner
5 supported and encouraged designation by the Landmarks
6 Preservation Commission in 1967, the house was left
7 unprotected for decades. Despite there being no
8 requirement to do so, the current owners, Alfredo and
9 Katherine De Vito, lovingly restored 412 East 85th
10 Street in 1996 using historic photographs and
11 material evidence found on site. Mr. De Vito a
12 renowned architect in his own right successfully
13 designed two new buildings in the Brooklyn Heights
14 Historic District 54 Willow Street and 222 Columbia
15 Street. Among six remaining wooden houses on the
16 Upper East Side, as mentioned before, 412 East 85th
17 Street is the only one that does not boast landmark
18 designation. As such the Municipal Arts Society
19 fully supports 412 East 85th Street as an individual
20 New York City landmark.

21 SIMEON BANKOFF: Good afternoon Council
22 Member and my esteemed colleagues have really said
23 everything I would say about this building. It has—
24 this building, as has been stated, aside from its
25 early historic and architectural merit, it's clear

1
2 that it has been a special building in the Upper East
3 Side for a very long time, and commands a high level
4 of responsible stewardship. We urge the Council to
5 support the landmark designation of 412 East 85th
6 Street to celebrate and protect this rare piece of
7 Yorkville's history for generation to come.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. [background
9 comments, pause] Let me see the next item on here.
10 [off mic] Any others that want to testify on this
11 item? Seeing none, we will move onto another item.
12 [on mic] Yeah, seeing none, we will move onto
13 another time. Now, we have—I seen some of it. With
14 that LU item LU 577, the Bergdorf Goodman Building,
15 which is in Council Member Garodnick's district. We
16 have Christabel Gough, Simone—Simone Bankoff and Tara
17 Kelly yeah to testify.

18 SIMEON BANKOFF: [off mic] No Tara.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Oh, and Tara. Okay.
20 [background comments] Can you please identify
21 yourself and then start, yeah.

22 CHRISTABEL GOUGH: Christabel Gough
23 speaking for the Society for the Architecture of the
24 City. We are here to urge you to affirm the
25 Landmarks Commission's designation for the Bergdorf

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2 Goodman Building. I would have slept better last
3 night if I had known that Council Member Garodnick
4 supports it. We are so grateful. Please cast an eye
5 over the report, which—which we commissioned on
6 Bergdorf's history, which is being passed around now
7 I believe. It is a real New York story of a small
8 tailor in business that grew to become an
9 institution. By its backlog this designation has
10 been raising since 1970 and cannot wait longer if the
11 building is to survive. Why does this matter?
12 Consider the magnet of Fifth Avenue and 57th Street.
13 This is a sterling part of New York. It's Tiffany's
14 the Crown Building and just beyond the Plaza, the
15 Plaza Hotel, the Golden Statue of Victor leading
16 General Sherman, the Pulitzer Fountain, the
17 Metropolitan Club, the Sherry Netherland and the
18 great green expanse of Central Park. Surely
19 Bergdorfs a key part of this extraordinary place, a
20 circle of beautiful monuments that should not be
21 broken. You have heard many protests against the
22 glassy new mega towers of 57th Street. We are not
23 here to join in that except to say please not here,
24 not to replace these marble walls and tiled mansards,
25 the curving iron work and the ornamental lanterns,

1 the dignity and grace of the old department store.

2 Let's keep this special place as it is to balance the
3 change that is all around us. Thank you.

4
5 SIMEON BANKOFF: Good afternoon Council
6 Members. Simeon Bankoff, Historic District Council.
7 Bergdorf Goodman completed in 1927 after designs by
8 Buchanan and Kahn on the exterior and Shreve and Lamb
9 on the interior with Robert W. Allen entrance hall is
10 one of those rare buildings about which one can truly
11 say it is unique. It is significant for its
12 inventive reformed design, which creates the illusion
13 of an historical old world street scape by breaking
14 down the building mass into several smaller units.
15 These narrow building elements roughly 25 feet wide
16 and the distinctive slate roof, a defining feature of
17 the building, recalled the—the scale, texture and
18 skyline of older townscapes. Not only is the
19 building significant for the high quality of its
20 design by important modern architect, it is also
21 significant for its intended role in the urban
22 context, a role it still fulfills today. An article
23 in the magazine *Through the Ages* from 1931 noted,
24 "The exterior in the Louis XVI style is a of white
25 marble including the cornices thus bringing it into

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2 harmony with the others facing the plaza and with the
3 Squibb Building at the southeast corner of Fifth
4 Avenue and 58th Street, is one of those rare
5 instances where consideration is given to the
6 neighboring architecture, a procedure, which is
7 unfortunately too infrequently carried out. It is
8 great fortune for New York that this urban
9 environment can still be experienced today. The
10 Squibb Building at 745 Fifth Avenue, also designed by
11 Ely Jacques Kahn, continues to be the whole presence
12 in this urban landscape as do the Pierre and the
13 sharing of the—the plaza, three nearby New York City
14 landmarks. We would like to point out that this
15 designation report has an unusual feature including
16 the statement of regulatory intent. This statement,
17 which is largely without precedent, although not
18 unique, describes in very broad terms that the
19 Landmarks Commission recognizes the needs of the
20 retail enterprise—the needs of the retail enterprise
21 may continue to change in the future, and will con-
22 sider—and will consider an historic evolution of
23 the building when evaluating future alterations.
24 While innocuous in its wording, it is a curious thing
25 to be included in a designation report as a standard

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2 for the Landmark Commission's decisions is
3 appropriateness [bell] to the character of the
4 historic structure. One should safely assume when
5 regarding a building design designated for its
6 importance in New York City as a department store
7 that retail enterprise would be a substantial part of
8 that character.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Now, we're
10 going to close. Are there any questions or any
11 public comments on this particular item? No. Seeing
12 none, we will move onto Items No. 575 and 576 and
13 583, and we want to invite Simone Bankoff and Tara
14 Kelly to offer testimony on these remaining items.

15 SIMEON BANKOFF: Nope, just me. Okay.
16 Thank you, Council Members. Simeon Bankoff, Historic
17 Districts Council. I'm very pleased to honor
18 testimony in support of all three of these items.
19 Firstly, let us talk of St. Barbara's Roman Catholic
20 Church, which is a neighborhood anchor, a magnificent
21 piece of architecture that many would be surprised to
22 learn is not already protected by the Landmarks Law.
23 In fact, this building appeared on wish lists of
24 landmark worthy buildings as early as the 1950 before
25 there was even a Landmarks Law to protect it. As

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2 part of the Backlog Initiative, the Landmarks—the LPC
3 has acted to finally designate this church and we
4 urge Council to support that designation. It's a
5 beautiful church. The Excelsior building the
6 Excelsior Power Company as well? Good. The
7 Excelsior Power Company is the oldest power
8 generating station in New York City with eleven power
9 stations whose energy helped grow New York into the
10 city it is have been demolished throughout the five
11 boroughs. The Excelsior Power Company, which is an
12 architectural abnormality—*anomaly* in the Financial
13 District, has been successfully adopted and re-used
14 as residences despite its original industrial use.
15 This building remains intact and has overcome
16 functional obsolescence proving that buildings can
17 have a successful act, and that adaptively reusing
18 historic buildings is not only feasible, but adds
19 inherent value to the project. We are also doing
20 Brougham Cottage in Staten Island. Okay, Brougham
21 Cottage is wonderful. About 18 years ago I worked
22 with the City of New York to try to acquire that
23 property for the City of New York, and I'm thrilled
24 that the Parks Department actually has it in—in its
25 portfolio of historic houses that is going to be used

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2 for some of kind of public use. It's a lovely very,
3 very old building that definitely deserves to be
4 preserved.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Mr. Bankoff.
6 Are there any other public members who want to
7 testify on these items? See none, we will conclude
8 public testimony on all these items. [background
9 comments] Yeah, and we will close public hearing on
10 all these applications. The Sub-Subcommittee needs
11 further time to deliberate on the applications for
12 the Lowe's 175th Street Theater, the Prot-the
13 Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing and the
14 Lakeman-Cortelyou House in Staten Island, which is LU
15 580, 581 and 582. These items-these items are,
16 therefore, laid over. I will now couple the
17 remaining six applications, LU 574, 575, 576, 577,
18 579 and 583 for a vote to approve. Counsel, please
19 call the roll.

20 LEGAL COUNSEL: Chair Koo.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: I vote aye.

22 LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Palma.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: [off mic] Aye.

24 LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Mendez.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Aye.

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LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I vote aye.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Kallos.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Aye.

LEGAL COUNSEL: By a vote of 5 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0 abstentions Land Use Items 574, 575, 576 [background comments]. We're leaving the vote open for how long? [background comments]

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Only have one more member and she's coming to the vote yes. [background comments]

LEGAL COUNSEL: We'll leave the vote open for 15 minutes.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes. Okay.
[background comments, pause]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Rose.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Aye on all.

LEGAL COUNSEL: By a vote of 6 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0 abstentions, Land Use Items 574, 575, 576, 577, 578 and 583 are approved and referred to the full Land Use Committee.

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CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you members of
the public, my colleagues, counsel and Land Use
staff. This meeting is 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 18, 2017