

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATIONS OF THE THOMAS JEFFERSON PLAY CENTER (MANHATTAN), THE McCARREN PLAY CENTER (BROOKLYN) AND THE SUNSET PLAY CENTER (BROOKLYN)
October 9, 2007**

Good morning Councilmembers. My name is Diane Jackier, Director of External Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designations of the Thomas Jefferson Play Center in Manhattan, the McCarren Play Center in Brooklyn and the Sunset Play Center (interior and exterior) as New York City landmarks.

On January 30, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designations. Several people spoke in favor including Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe, and representatives of the Municipal Arts Society, the Historic Districts Council, the Society for the Architecture of the City, the Preservation League of Staten Island, and the Landmarks Conservancy. A representative of Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer also spoke in favor of the Thomas Jefferson Play Center and the McCarren Play Center. In addition, for McCarren, representatives of Assemblymember Joseph Lentol, the Waterfront Preservation Alliance of Greenpoint & Williamsburg, the McCarren Park Conservancy and, at the time of designation, Council Member Rosie Mendez, all spoke in favor of designation. Several of the speakers also expressed support for the larger designation effort of all the WPA-era pools. There were no speakers in opposition. The Commission also received letters in support of designation, including a letter from Council Member Sara Gonzalez in support of the Sunset Play Center designation. The Commission previously held public hearings on the proposed designations on April 3, 1990 and September 11, 1990. On July 24, 2007, the Commission designated the Thomas Jefferson Play Center, the McCarren Play Center and the interior and exterior of the Sunset Play Center, New York City landmarks.

All three of these play centers are part of the group of eleven immense outdoor swimming pools opened in the summer of 1936 in a series of grand ceremonies presided over by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and Parks Commissioner Robert Moses. All eleven of the pools were constructed largely with funding provided by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), one of many New Deal agencies created in the 1930s to address the Great Depression. Designed to accommodate a total of 49,000 users simultaneously at locations throughout New York City's five boroughs, the new pool complexes quickly gained recognition as being among the most remarkable public facilities constructed in the country. The pools

were completed just two and half years after the LaGuardia administration took office, and all but one survives relatively intact today.

At the start, the Parks Department adopted a list of shared guidelines for the entire pool project in order to enhance the efficiency of the design effort, to unify the operations of each complex, and to meet the various local and federal requirements of the relief programs. For example, each pool complex was to have separate swimming, diving and wading pools, and a large bath house, the locker room sections of which doubled as gymnasiums during non-swimming months. The bath houses, which would serve as the centerpieces of each complex, would be distinctive pavilions that would establish the motif of each facility. Despite the fact that the basic components were essentially the same and that the WPA required that only the least expensive materials be used, each of these swimming pool complexes is especially notable for its distinctive and unique setting, appearance and character. The team of designers, landscape architects and engineers assembled to execute the new pool complexes was comprised largely of staff members and consultants who had earlier worked for Moses at other governmental agencies, including architect Aymar Embury II, landscape architects Gilmore D. Clarke and Allyn R. Jennings, and civil engineers W. Earle Andrews and William H. Latham.

The Thomas Jefferson, McCarren and Sunset Play Centers all survive today as reminders of the impressive WPA structures built in New York City. The Commission urges you to affirm the designations.

TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE
CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND
MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF THE SUNNYSIDE GARDENS
HISTORIC DISTRICT, QUEENS

October 9, 2007

Good morning Chair Lappin and honorable Council members. My name is Bob Tierney, Chairman of the Landmarks Commission. I'm here today to testify in favor of the Commission's designation of the Sunnyside Gardens Historic District.

I have been very interested in Sunnyside Gardens as a potential historic district since being appointed by Mayor Bloomberg as Chair of the Landmarks Commission in 2003. Recognized nationally and internationally as one of the most significant planned residential communities in New York City and the country, this neighborhood is important because of its history, site plan, open, landscaped courtyards and simple yet sophisticated architecture and construction. Very simply, it is a unique part of New York City with a distinct sense of place, and that is the very definition of a historic district.

As you have all heard me say many times, one of my goals as chairman has been to designate more buildings outside Manhattan. I am proud to say that with its 624 buildings, Sunnyside Gardens is the largest historic district in Queens, and also the largest historic district the Landmarks Commission has designated in more than a decade.

[MAP – LPC Map of District]

Sunnyside Gardens was the creation of architects Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, along with the City Housing Corporation led by developer Alexander Bing. Constructed between 1924 and 1928, it consists of a series of twelve "courts" (composed of rows of townhouses and small apartment buildings), built on all or part of 16 blocks. The historic district is bounded roughly by Barnett Avenue to the north, 43rd Street to the west, Skillman Avenue to the south, although it jogs down 47th Street, just about to Queens Boulevard, and then it jogs around to 52nd Street on the east.

[NEXT SLIDE - Image of Phipps and Park] The designated area also includes the Phipps Gardens Apartment Buildings, which are two courtyard apartment buildings constructed by Stein in 1931-32 and 1935, and Sunnyside Park.

[NEXT SLIDE - HISTORIC MAP] The development at Sunnyside Gardens was the first practical application of the architecture and planning concepts developed by the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA). RPAA was a diverse group that met from 1923 to 1931 to examine the roots of the country's housing crisis and to try to find new approaches to providing quality housing for low-income workers. They studied a wide variety of issues linked to housing, including financing, urban regional planning, the environment and sociological aspects of city life, and became convinced that the existing problems could not be fixed solely through better architecture. Sunnyside was the first effort of this group to create a physical solution to the problems they had found.

[NEXT SLIDE - Colonial Court plan] In order to save costs, the designers, Wright and Stein, had planned to eliminate some streets to create larger blocks for Sunnyside Gardens. Since they were not allowed to do this because the street grid had already been established in Queens when they started, they eliminated the lot divisions and worked with entire city blocks as their unit of planning. The first block was Colonial Court, between 43rd (Foster) and Skillman Avenues, and 47th (Carolin) and 48th Streets (Gosman Avenue). Begun in early spring of 1924 and finished by the fall, the City Housing Corporation was able to move on to Hamilton Court in the spring of 1925.

[NEXT SLIDE- Hamilton Court plan] By May 1, 1926, the CHC had constructed homes for approximately 600 families. They continued to build on the rest of the area over the next two years and by fall 1928, they deemed Sunnyside Gardens complete. In all, they had provided residences for more than 1,200 families.

[NEXT SLIDE - Row montages] The design of Sunnyside Gardens includes the layout of the entire community, the planning of each individual block, as well as the plan and exterior design of the individual units. Stein and Wright did not want the architecture to appear revolutionary since so many other ideas they were introducing were more unusual. They designed the houses in a somewhat familiar, simplified Colonial Revival style.

Since their goals for this project were both aesthetic and sociological, the designers chose to combine different types of houses and apartments within the courts. The row houses were divided into 26 distinct types, ranging from two to five bays, based on the front fenestration pattern. By combining buildings with several types of layouts, roof outlines, heights, detailing, and sizes they created a sophisticated streetscape with visual variety and interest. Although many developers were creating large-scale apartment buildings at this time, the designers of Sunnyside believed that more “human scale” buildings would further their goals of community. The buildings are simply designed on both the interior and exterior, and rely aesthetically on materials, proportion and arrangement rather than extensive applied ornament.

[NEXT SLIDE - Hamilton interior court] Generally, the houses were arranged in perimeter rows close to the street, with large open areas behind them, located in the interiors of the blocks. There were small private gardens behind each house (about 30 feet deep) but most of the space was devoted to shared open courtyards. [NEXT SLIDE - Washington Court pathway] The individual houses were grouped in rows, with the groups separated from each other by pathways that allowed access to the common gardens and traversed the blocks from street to street. [NEXT SLIDE - Jefferson Court plan/photo] Different courts had variations of these layouts. Two of the later courts were arranged as mews, perpendicular to the streets with their courtyards enclosed by the houses.

On the whole, the buildings covered only 28% of the land, which created an unusually large amount of open space. This access to open, green space was a basic tenet of the design of Sunnyside Gardens for several reasons. First, they could have a variety of uses and would contribute to the sense of community they were trying to create at Sunnyside. Second, by incorporating large amounts of green space in their overall designs, the architects felt they were able to provide smaller living spaces, with the common gardens serving as extensions of the living areas for the residents. For the entire development, the total area of the common gardens is almost six acres.

[NEXT SLIDE - Contrasting courts] The landscape designer for Sunnyside Gardens, Marjorie Cautley (part of the RPAA and one of the first female landscape architects) believed strongly in the importance of the landscape to create a healthier environment and was devoted to creating economically feasible and sustainable landscapes to support and enhance affordable housing

projects. Each court was laid out with a horticulturally unique garden intended to engage the community in an “experience of nature and landscape.” The centers of the courts were often open lawns with trees and shrubbery, surrounded by hedges and ground cover while the streets were planted with Sycamores and London plane trees that were intended to mature into a green canopy for the area. [NEXT SLIDE - Tree canopy]

Because the planners and architects wanted to ensure that their carefully designed neighborhood would continue, they attached easements to the deeds of the property sold at Sunnyside. The primary purpose of the easements was to create and control the open space for the benefit of all residents. Although the property owners owned their entire lots, running to the center line of the block, the easements ensured that the central, common space would remain open for communal use. These rules helped insure that the plans and designs of the architects would remain in effect and that the desired visual unity would continue. Unfortunately most of the easements expired after 40 years and only one court, Hamilton Court, agreed to an extension.

For the first ten years of its existence, Sunnyside Gardens functioned as its designers and developers had hoped. Alexander Bing and the City Housing Corporation developed what was then considered to be a unique financing plan for Sunnyside Gardens which allowed the homes to be accessible to many people who could not otherwise afford to purchase them. Because of the low initial costs and the ability to secure second mortgages that could be repaid over a long period of time, the development attracted “a cross-section of those of moderate means,” including people of many ethnicities. Half of the first residents moved to Sunnyside from the Lower East Side. From the 1940s through the mid-1960s, young families and artists moved to Sunnyside from other, more crowded parts of the city. Well known residents of that period included Rudy Vallee, Judy Holliday, Perry Como, and trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke.

In 1974, the City Planning Commission designated the area a Special Planned Community Preservation District (one of four in the city) and required permits for certain exterior changes to the buildings and landscape.

[NEXT SLIDE - Concluding Slide] Sunnyside Gardens has continued to house people of many different ethnicities and backgrounds and maintains many of the features that have made it nationally and internationally recognized as an important model in the fields of housing,

architecture, real estate finance and urban regional planning. Sunnyside demonstrated that the innovative large-scale design and creative site planning achieved by the architects could produce a superior residential environment with an exceptional amount of open space available to its residents for the benefits of nature, light and recreation. It was the first effort of the RPAA to show the positive effects that regional planning and low-cost capital could have on housing projects and was the basis from which they moved on to the innovations in planning and design that they achieved at Radburn in New Jersey and Chatham Village in Pittsburgh. Long-time resident Lewis Mumford called Sunnyside Gardens “an exceptional community, laid out by people who were deeply human and who gave the place a permanent expression of that humanness.”

When the Landmarks Commission held its hearing on the proposed designation of Sunnyside Gardens on April 17, 2007, 138 people expressed support for designation, including representatives of State Assemblywoman Margaret Markey, Borough President Helen Marshall, the Municipal Art Society, the American Institute of Architects (Queens and New York Chapters), the Regional Plan Association, the Historic Districts Council, the Richmond Hill Society, the Newbergh Colonial Terrace Society, the Greater Astoria Historical Society, the Queens Preservation Council, Metropolitan Historic Structures, the Radburn Historical Preservation Society, the Rego Park Preservation Council, and numerous citizens and local residents. Speakers representing Washington Court and the Harrison Place Associations testified that a majority of their residents were in favor of designation. There were 27 speakers opposed to designation, including representatives of the Sunnyside Gardens Coalition, Preserve Sunnyside Gardens, and the Institute for Justice. In addition, the Commission received hundreds of letters and petitions regarding this designation, the majority of which have been in favor of designation, including a letter of support from Assembly Member Cathy Nolan. I want to also note the great support of Councilman Eric Gioia in this effort.

On June 26, 2007, the Landmarks Commission voted unanimously to designate Sunnyside Gardens a New York City historic district. At that time, the Commissioners and I specifically stated that the open spaces and site planning of the neighborhood needed to be preserved. To ensure this protection, the Commission will bring applications for rear yard additions in Sunnyside to public hearing for the Commissioners to evaluate. City Planning has introduced a text amendment to modify the Planned Community District in Sunnyside, which will eliminate duplicative review by removing the special permit requirements for developments or substantial alterations to the building

footprints or landscaping. We have been working very closely with the Department to make sure that the special features both our agencies have identified are protected for the future.

With respect to other regulation in the district besides the rear yards, the Commission's existing Rules have been working extremely well. To date, we have issued 15 permits at staff level and 2 Certificates of Appropriateness, which were approved by the Commissioners after a public hearing. As always, we are committed to doing outreach to owners so people become familiar with our regulatory processes. We have created a user-friendly document explaining our Rules, which outlines what work requires a permit and what doesn't - and this will be finalized and available shortly. Furthermore, we have been working with Councilman Gioia and District Leader Deirdre Peerick to arrange for periodic office hours in the district. Our expert staff will be available in Sunnyside to answer any questions and help owners apply for permits.

As you can tell, I am very excited about this district for so many reasons. I urge you to support this designation and am happy to answer any questions you may have.



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS


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Statement Regarding the Affirmation of the Sunnyside Gardens Historic District
City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting & Maritime Uses
October 9, 2007


The Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York's historic neighborhoods. We are extraordinarily pleased to have the opportunity to testify before the City Council in support of the designation of the Sunnyside Gardens Historic District. HDC has been working closely with members of the Sunnyside Gardens community since mid-2003 on this preservation effort and in that time has participated in numerous public information panels about this effort. In fact, almost 3 years ago exactly – on October 18, 2004, we hosted a free panel called “Before and After Landmark Designation: Real Stories from Neighbors” at the Sunnyside Community Services Center featuring homeowners and residents from historic districts in Douglaston, Jackson Heights and St. George telling their stories about how their neighborhoods have fared under landmark designation. We look forward to enlisting some of the residents of Sunnyside Gardens to participate in similar panels in the future.

It is transparently obvious to anyone who has visited Sunnyside Gardens that the area possesses a unique character and sense of place derived from its built form. This character is created from the interplay of simple, consistent architectural patterns and verdant, graciously-planned open spaces and landscapes. Working together, these components invoke a harmonious, unpretentious and welcoming feel to the neighborhood, which is very much in keeping with the noble ideals espoused by the community's designers.

In truth, this designation is one of those instances where the social and cultural significance of an area is at least equal to its architectural importance. By specifically mandating the incorporation of open space into the area's design, these buildings went beyond their avowed purpose of promoting physical health to create a sense of neighborhood cohesiveness seemingly lost in other parts of modern life. In a way, these courtyards are the antithesis of the later “towers in the park” developments which were promulgated by later generations of planners and that did so much damage to our urban environment. The prevalence of that failed design, and the continued success of Sunnyside Gardens only underscores this neighborhood's continuing relevance to how we think about the city.



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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The houses themselves were designed with an intentional simplicity using with common design elements to allow for affordable mass construction. Details such as Colonial revival doorways, alternating hipped slate and flat roofs and Art Deco brick patterns on the parapets created visual variety. In this respect, they are no different than the repetitive elements of the brownstone rows in earlier developments such as Fort Greene, Park Slope or the Upper West Side. Here as there, the consistency of materials and reoccurrence of design elements create unified and pleasing urban streetscapes. As simple and as small as the buildings' forms and decorative elements may seem, they are vital to the neighborhood's architectural cohesiveness and visual character and must be preserved to ensure that character continues to endure.

Sunnyside Gardens, one of the most significant planned residential communities in New York City, is internationally recognized among planners and urbanists for its low-rise, low-density quality housing. One of the last steps to its continued preservation is the successful designation of the neighborhood as a New York City historic district. HDC strongly urges the City Council to affirm this designation and help preserve Sunnyside Gardens so future New Yorkers can continue to enjoy and learn from it.

AIA New York Chapter

The Founding Chapter of The American Institute of Architects



Hon. Jessica Lappin, Chair
Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

October 9, 2007

Dear Chair Lappin:

On behalf of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and its more than 4,000 architect and public members, we respectfully submit this letter of support for the confirmation of Sunnyside Gardens, Queens, as an Historic District. We join the voices of our colleagues at AIA Queens in calling for this confirmation, because preserving Sunnyside Gardens is a matter of importance, not only for residents of the immediate area and the borough of Queens, but for all residents of New York City.

It is the responsibility of our elected and appointed officials to define, delineate, and protect districts that have a distinctive and irreplaceable historic character. As architects, we at the AIA New York Chapter feel especially strongly that Sunnyside Gardens requires protection. The neighborhood is one of New York's best remaining examples of planning from the 'City Beautiful' movement; its unique character is quiet and modern with an understated and elegant design. The scale and charming details, the internal courts, and consistent brick-lined streets all contribute to a peaceful and cohesive whole. The architectural concepts and integrity of this planned community must be preserved.

As New York City transforms at an increasingly rapid pace, it becomes vital that historically, culturally and architecturally significant areas be granted the protection of the landmarks law if we are to preserve them for future generations. We are delighted that the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission has designated Sunnyside Gardens as an Historic District, and urge the Council to confirm this designation.

Sincerely,

Joan Blumenfeld, FAIA, IIDA
2007 President, AIA New York Chapter

Fredric Bell, FAIA
Executive Director

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Testimony before the City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses

by Keenan Hughes

Regarding the Landmark Designation of Sunnyside Gardens, Queens

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

The Municipal Art Society of New York is a private, non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote a more livable city. Since 1893, the Society has worked to advocate excellence in urban design and planning, contemporary architecture, historic preservation and public art.

I am Keenan Hughes, speaking on behalf of the Municipal Art Society's preservation committee. The preservation committee enthusiastically supports the historic district designation of Sunnyside Gardens.

Sunnyside Gardens is an internationally recognized example of quality in the design and planning of residential living for low- and middle-income families. Clarence S. Stein and Henry Wright designed Sunnyside Gardens to provide low- and middle-income families "health, open space, greenery, and idyllic community living for all." Lewis Mumford, an architecture critic and long-time resident of Sunnyside, described it as "an exceptional community laid out by people who were deeply human and who gave the place a permanent expression of that humaneness." Sunnyside Gardens is a thriving and distinct neighborhood that clearly deserves the permanent protection of historic district designation.

While many in the community support the designation, some have raised questions about how restrictive the Landmarks Preservation Commission will be. The Commission regularly reviews and approves proposals for alterations, additions, and new buildings in the city's 80 historic districts. Many of the most common applications go through an expedited staff review. Residents will find that this designation will result in a more orderly and clear permitting process than existed under the Special Planned Community Preservation District. That said, we understand that there is some concern over the Commission's jurisdiction over intrusions into the gardens. We have been assured that the Commission will regulate those protected areas

carefully, as they do in districts across the city.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission, made up of experts in the field of architecture, architectural history, planning, real estate and preservation, is the City's agency charged with determining what buildings and sites are so important that they deserve protection. This is not a decision the commissioners make lightly. Several years of survey work, community meetings, and public hearings informed the Commission's vote.

The record before the Commission was clear on the outstanding merits of the Sunnyside Gardens Historic District. The Municipal Art Society hopes that the Council will satisfy itself that this district deserves the protection of the law, notwithstanding the opposition of some property owners. Without historic district designation, the cohesiveness, unique history, and social fabric of Sunnyside Gardens remains at risk.

FOR THE RECORD

Statement to the NYC City Council Landmarks Committee – October 9, 2007

Christine Hunter AIA, LEED AP
39-33 49th Street, Sunnyside, NY 11104

Good afternoon. My name is Christine Hunter – I'm an architect working mainly in the design of affordable and mixed-use housing, and I've lived with my family in Sunnyside Gardens for 19 years.

I love my neighborhood - for its original design and its current variety. Both its social and ethnic diversity and the range of its public and private landscapes are unique. As a forerunner of current efforts to create human-scaled and walkable mixed-income neighborhoods, Sunnyside Gardens has a historic importance that's very relevant today. From an environmental point of view it's also a striking example, like Central Park, of a totally man-made urban green space. This area that now has perhaps the densest tree canopy in Queens was created some eighty years ago from a boggy landfill next to a new rail-yard.

The City Planning Commission recognized Sunnyside Gardens' historic design when it enacted the "Planned Community" zoning provisions thirty years ago. But since then there have been continuing and destructive changes, such as the paving over of green space for parking and the extension of individual houses. These incremental alterations eat away at the distinctive streetscapes and common courts, and run counter to the special zoning's intent. Unfortunately, enforcement of the zoning by the Department of Buildings has been weak and inconsistent. Even when DOB does issue violations, most illegal changes go uncorrected, and the special permits required from City Planning for legal changes are simply too cumbersome and expensive for many homeowners to obtain. The result is a lot of confusion and frustration for residents.

Based on my understanding of the city's agencies, I think that the Landmarks Preservation Commission should have jurisdiction in the neighborhood. The LPC can do the best job of working with homeowners to maintain its essential character, and I urge you to confirm the Commission's designation. At the same time I believe there must be neighborhood-specific rules that focus on the true "character-defining" features of both the open space and the modest houses, without over-regulating less significant elements.

The recent controversy over landmarking has been painful for many residents and disturbed what is usually a more low-key and friendly community. I understand the concern that designation will increase the costs and paperwork needed to keep up our houses, but I don't think this has to be the case. Historic preservation is important for all types of worthy buildings and cityscapes, not just those built for the wealthy. Sunnyside Gardens was an important laboratory for exploring community design; it will be a loss to the city, and to those of us who live there, if it is not preserved. Thank you.

CT
NJ NY
Regional Plan Association

October 9, 2007

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The Honorable Jessica S. Lappin
Chairperson, Landmarks, Public Siting & Maritime Uses Subcommittee
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: Sunnyside Gardens Historic District Designation

Chairperson Lappin:

Regional Plan Association wants to express its unconditional support for designation of Sunnyside Gardens as a Historic District. As the first and pioneer Garden City movement community built in America, this example of urbanism and architecture is a tribute to Twentieth Century worker housing developments as the prototype for later work at Radburn, NJ, Chatham Village in Pittsburgh and the New Deal Greenbelt Towns. It remains a model of human scaled, compact and livable communities that inspire urban planners today. By designating the community as a Historic District the Council will insure that this remains the case for future generations.

As you are well aware, the Special Planned Community Preservation District now in place protects Sunnyside Gardens only partially. A proposed text amendment would eliminate these existing City Planning Commission special permit requirements for development, enlargement, or substantial alteration of landscaping or topography. The architectural building integrity is thus not currently protected. Also, the current preservation district doesn't protect the Phipps Garden Apartments, part of the community site plan. In order to safeguard the architecture and complete site plan, including Phipps Gardens Apartments, Sunnyside Gardens should be designated a Historic District. We believe that this designation will safeguard one of Queens' historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage resources and encourage civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you will like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,



L. Nicolas Ronderos
Senior Planner

Queens Preservation Council

Mitchell Grubler, Chairman

Testimony before the New York City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses October 9, 2007

My name is Mitchell Grubler. I am Chairman of the Queens Preservation Council and I have been authorized to testify before you today on behalf of the QPC in favor of the proposed Sunnyside Gardens Historic District. The Queens Preservation Council was organized by Borough Historian and former Queens Historical Society President, Stanley Cogan. It is composed of representatives from civic associations, neighborhood groups and historical organizations concerned with the quality of life for Queens residents as it is affected by the built environment.

Because mostly rural Queens was largely undeveloped until the advent of the 20th Century, the availability of large tracts of land and its proximity to Manhattan resulted in three unique and distinctive neighborhoods that remain the pride of the borough. All three are testaments to the talents of planners, architects and builders who created bold new visions for neighborhoods of middle class families with a comfortable human scale and abundant landscaped open spaces. All three remain highly desirable today due to both their special design qualities and to the care and pride which their residents take in their uniquely livable communities.

The first generation of the three communities is Jackson Heights, a good portion of which is already a New York City Historic District. One of its most important features is the landscaped mid-block parks, expertly-designed open spaces shared by all the residents of the apartment block.

Sunnyside Gardens is the next generation, inheritor of that concept of creating livable communities for middle class families by building-in abundant landscaped open spaces. As a matter of fact, in the case of Sunnyside Gardens the buildings only cover 28% of the land allowing for central open courts for recreation and community use. The special "sense of place", an important measure of an historic district according to the landmarks law, is unmistakable in Sunnyside Gardens. Almost from its inception in the 1920s it has been in the text books of every basic urban planning course. It is time for this special community to join its predecessor as a historic district.

The third generation of livable planned communities in Queens is historic Parkway Village. Assisted by Robert Moses, John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Mayor William O'Dwyer it was built in 1947 to house the new United Nations workers, a factor in the decision to base the UN in New York. Here, again, the physical arrangement and amenities as well as the community organizational system, most notably the abundant landscaped common grounds, continue to foster the developer's goal of creating a neighborhood that would meet the social as well as physical needs of its residents. After voting to uphold the Sunnyside Gardens Historic District I hope the representatives from Queens can do what they can to see that Parkway Village takes its rightful place amongst the list of historic districts in Queens. There is no question that all three are worthy.

Thank you.