

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES REGARDING DESIGNATION OF MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICT

May 2, 2017

Good morning Chair Koo and Committee Members. My name is Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research at the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). I am here to testify on the designation of the Morningside Heights Historic District. The district was designated by unanimous vote of the Commission on February 21, 2017.

On December 6, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Thirty-three people spoke in favor of the designation as proposed, including the Councilmember Mark Levine, representatives of Congressman Jerrold Nadler, New York State Assemblyman Daniel O'Donnell, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Barnard College, Morningside Heights Historic District Committee, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Landmark Westl, Historic Districts Council, Society for the Architecture of the City, Morningside Heights Community Coalition, 622 West 114th Owners' Corp. and 21 individuals. Five speakers, including representatives of Columbia University, Congregation Ramath Orah, Broadway Presbyterian Church, and the Real Estate Board of New York opposed the inclusion of selected properties within the district. One resident spoke in opposition to the designation of the entire district. In addition, the Commission received 16 pieces of correspondence: 11 in support of the designation of the district as proposed, including one from New York State Senator Bill Perkins, and four opposed to the inclusion of specific properties. One letter opposed designation of the district as proposed. The Commission received four petitions in support of designation from the neighborhood with a total of 94 signatures.

The Morningside Heights Historic District consists of approximately 115 residential and institutional buildings representing the district's rapid transformation at the turn of the last century into a densely populated neighborhood. Isolated by its topography, lack of public transportation, and the presence of an orphanage and insane asylum, Morningside Heights remained largely undeveloped through the 19th century. In the 1890s, the Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum and the Bloomingdale Insane Asylum sold their parcels to the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and Columbia University which, along with the arrival of other institutions, began the transformation of Morningside Heights into the "acropolis" of New York. New residential development began in 1892-93 when Henry O. Chapman designed the first row



houses in Morningside Heights at 633 and 635 West 115th Street for two Columbia law professors. With Morningside Heights still underserved by public transportation, speculative development within the district remained minimal with only scattered row houses and a few early flats buildings, along with a few fraternity houses, constructed through the first years of the 20th century. This changed with the arrival of the IRT along Broadway in 1904, which connected Morningside Heights with midtown and lower Manhattan. Beginning in 1903 with the construction of six small apartment buildings along West 111th Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Broadway, speculative developers, many of whom where Italian or Jewish, rapidly filled the plateau with apartment houses marketed to the middle and upper middle classes, giving the Morningside Heights Historic District its character as a neighborhood of distinctive upper and middle class apartment houses.

By 1911, another 69 apartment buildings had been constructed. Smaller buildings joined the district's existing row houses on the side streets while larger structures filled the main thoroughfares of Cathedral Parkway, Riverside Drive, Claremont Avenue, Broadway, and West 116th Street. Eight more apartment buildings were completed by the end of the 1920s when this rapid period of growth came to an end. As the district developed, churches and clubs like the Broadway Presbyterian Church (Louis A. Jallade, 1911-12), West Side Unitarian Church (now Congregation Ramath Orah, Hoppin & Koen, 1921-22) and the Explorers Club (now Harmony Hall, Charles E. Birge, 1928-29) were attracted to the neighborhood with its large residential and academic population.

The Morningside Heights Historic District reflects a period of remarkable residential development in Manhattan with its array of well-maintained apartment buildings, houses, clubs and places of worship, designed by some of the City's most prominent architects. Designed in a range of revival styles popular in that era, the apartment buildings create a distinct character, animating the streetscapes through their materials, ornamentation and facade articulation. Accordingly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission urges you to affirm this designation. Thank you.



## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES REGARDING DESIGNATION of the WALDORF ASTORIA INTERIORS May 2, 2017

Good morning Chairs Koo, Greenfield and Committee Members. My name is Lauren George, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Commission's designation of the Waldorf Astoria Interiors, at 301 Park Avenue, Manhattan, Block 1304, Lot 7501. The Waldorf Astoria was designed by Architects Schultze & Weaver and built from 1929-31. After holding a public hearing on January 24, 2017, the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted unanimously to designate the interiors on March 7, 2017.

One of New York City's most prominent hotels, the Waldorf-Astoria was designed by Schultze & Weaver, an architectural firm that specialized in luxury hotels. Built in 1929-31, the elegant limestone exterior has been a New York City Landmark since 1993. The Waldorf Astoria Hotel Interiors include the primary public spaces – considered some of the finest and most varied Art Deco interiors in New York – as well as adjoining corridors that together form a memorable sequence of visually-connected spaces, tied to the experience of procession. Entering from Park or Lexington Avenue, these spaces flow seamlessly without interruption, expanding and contracting, from the ground level to the third (ballroom) floor. All of these luxurious rooms have had alterations and some exhibit new finishes but most retain their original modern classical details, artwork, metalwork, mirrors, glazed doors, and volume.

The first (lobby) floor includes the Park Avenue Lobby, a gracious entrance hall with 13 murals and a floor mosaic by the French artist Louis Rigal, as well as the wood-paneled Main Lobby, which features black marble columns and an elaborate plaster ceiling. Located at the center of the first floor is a freestanding clock, bearing portraits of American presidents and Queen Victoria. Acquired for the hotel's original building in the 1910s, it has stood at the center of the Main Lobby — on axis with the Park and Lexington Avenue entrances — since the late 1960s. At the east end of the first floor, near Lexington Avenue, elevators with handsome metal doors and staircases with decorative metalwork resembling "frozen fountains" ascend to the third (ballroom) floor. A long mirrored hallway, the Ballroom Entrance Hall (originally Silver Gallery), connects four ballrooms. This glittering space features a vaulted ceiling that incorporates 16 paintings by the American artist Edward Emerson Simmons. They are among the only features salvaged from the hotel's original building. The Grand (Main) Ballroom, one of the largest event



spaces in the New York City, accommodates more than 1,500 guests. Arranged on three levels, this fabled room has hosted countless dinners, banquets, galas and balls, including the annual Alfred E. Smith Dinner, a fundraiser for Catholic charities that attracts major presidential candidates. The third floor also contains the Basildon Room, which has colorful ceiling panels acquired from an 18th-century Palladian-style villa in England, as well as the more low-key Jade Room and Astor Gallery.

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel has often been called "New York's Unofficial Palace." A transient and residential hotel with stylish lobbies and spacious ballrooms, during its lengthy history the Waldorf has hosted far too many guests to count, from international dignitaries and celebrities to long-term residents and members of New York Society.

In a city where relatively few hotels preserve their historic interiors, these lavish public rooms remain important for containing some of the finest and most varied Art Deco interiors in New York City and their lasting cultural significance. Accordingly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission urges you to affirm the designation. Thank you.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> On January 24, 2017, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel as an Interior Landmark. Eight people testified in support of designation, including representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Art Deco Society of New York, and Historic Districts Council. Council Member Daniel R. Garodnick, New York State Senator Brad Hoylman, Manhattan Community Board 5 and Historic Park Avenue submitted testimony in support of designation. The Commission also received 33 pieces of correspondence, as well as a petition, submitted by the Art Deco Society of New York, signed by 826 people, all supporting designation.

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE DESIGNATION OF A MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICT -- Land Use Committee of the City Council-May 2, 2017

My name is Robert Stern. I am testifying today on behalf of the Morningside

Heights Community Coalition (MHCC), neighborhood residents—coop owners and

tenants—who have come together in recent months to ensure that rapidly-increasing

luxury housing development does not destroy the architectural and social fabric of our

community. Hundreds of community members have united out of a common love for our

neighborhood and a shared concern for its future. We have won the support of our elected

officials and have drawn the attention of city agencies.

The MHCC includes residents of all of Morningside Heights, from 110<sup>th</sup> to 125<sup>th</sup> Street, from Morningside Park to Riverside Park. We join together today in enthusiastically supporting the proposed designation of a historic district in the southern part of our neighborhood.

We support this district designation because it recognizes the unique character of Morningside Heights -- its cohesive grand scale along the avenues and drives, and its intimate scale along the cross streets giving it visual interest -- its European architectural character evoked by its signature Beaux-Arts-style buildings. This rare urban environment is invaluable not only to long-time neighborhood residents, but also to visitors, including tourists from all over the world and students and scholars drawn to its various academic institutions. Approving the proposed historic district designation is an important step in preserving our neighborhood as an international treasure.

We congratulate the Morningside Heights Historic District Committee on twenty years of tireless advocacy on behalf of our neighborhood. The MHCC looks forward to more phases to come in recognizing this distinctive and essential part of New York City's history, the character of which is now threatened by uncontrolled real estate development. Members of MHCC living north of 116<sup>th</sup> Street look forward to the time when the distinctive architecture of the northern section of Morningside Heights receives official recognition from the Landmark Preservation Commission. In the meantime all members of MHCC join in enthusiastically supporting today's proposed designation.

We thank the Landmark Preservation Commission for considering this proposal and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Robert Stern 390 Riverside Drive Morningside Heights Community Coalition Executive Committee



## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES REGARDING DESIGNATION of the CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE and the CATHEDRAL CLOSE

May 2, 2017

My name is Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research at the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). I am here to testify on the designation of Cathedral Church of St. John The Divine and the Cathedral Close, at 1047 Amsterdam Avenue, Manhattan (Block 1865, Lots 1, 10, S8010) as an individual landmark. One of the great religious complexes of the world, the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and the Cathedral Close serve as the seat of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. The Cathedral complex was completed over the span of more than a century, each building designed by prominent New York architects.

On December 6, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and the Cathedral Close. Eight people testified in favor of designation, including New York City Councilmember Mark Levine and the Dean of the Cathedral, as well as representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, and the Morningside Heights Committee. There was no testimony in opposition.

Along with the Cathedral, the complex, located at Amsterdam Avenue and West 112th Street, consists of six buildings that form the Close. The Cathedral and Close are considered a crowning glory of its Morningside Heights neighborhood, which came to be known as "the Acropolis of the new world" for the many cultural institutions that moved there in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Cathedral and the complex represent many phases of development over a long period of time and remain incomplete. Even in its unfinished state, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine remains one of the largest churches in the United States and the world. The cathedral was chartered in 1873 under the leadership of Bishop Horatio Potter. An architectural competition for the cathedral church was held in 1888 and won by the architectural firm of Heins & LaFarge. The winning proposal was an eclectic design incorporating elements of the Romanesque, Byzantine, and Gothic styles. The first phase of construction began in 1892 with the laying of the cornerstone and continued to 1911 when the crypt, choir, and crossing were completed. Changes in taste and the death of Heins in 1907 brought about a new French Gothic design for the completion of the cathedral by architect Ralph Adams Cram of the firm Cram,



Goodhue & Ferguson. A second construction phase began in 1916 and continued until 1941. During this period, the nave was completed and joined to the choir by a rough-finished crossing, the imposing west front was added, and the north transept was begun. Work resumed in 1979 on the towers of the west front and a proposal for the design of the south transept was adopted. The church's main vault rises to a height of 124 feet; its entire length is 601 feet. Its monumental size was intended to take advantage of its lofty location. Its stained-glass windows feature both biblical and modern characters. The cathedral remains unfinished.

Along with the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the auxiliary buildings of the Cathedral Close constitute one of the most outstanding ecclesiastical ensembles in the city. Partially extant from the era prior to the 1887 sale of this site for the Cathedral is the Leake & Watts Orphan Asylum (1838-42, Ithiel Town, architect; Samuel Thomson, builder), the oldest building in Morningside Heights and one of the most significant examples of a Greek Revival style institutional building of the 1830s with Ionic columns surviving in New York City (it has served a variety of Cathedral functions over the years). The Collegiate Gothic style St. Faith's House (1909-11, C. Grant LaFarge) was built as the home of the New York Training School for Deaconesses, an independent Episcopal institution, founded in 1890, that was granted a location on the Cathedral grounds by Cathedral trustees. The Collegiate Gothic style Choir School (1912-13, Walter Cook & Winthrop A. Welch) housed the school that was founded in 1901 in order to educate boys who would sing in the Cathedral choir. Ralph Adams Cram, of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, designed the remaining three of the Cathedral's auxiliary buildings: the neo-Gothic style Synod House (1912-14), built for the specific purpose of New York hosting the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1913, and the more domestically-scaled French Chateauesque style Deanery (1913), and Bishop's House (1912-14). The buildings that form the Cathedral Close, also designed by prominent New York architects, represent significant examples of their style and type.

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine and the Cathedral Close form one of the greatest and most well-known religious complexes not just in New York City, but in the United States and throughout the world. In seeking to protect this collection of significant buildings, the designation recognizes the Cathedral and Close's significance as an interconnected complex that has grown organically and will continue to evolve over time. Accordingly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission urges you to affirm this designation. Thank you.



- The Cathedral St. John the Divine (1047 Amsterdam Avenue). Built 1892-1911 (architects Heins & LaFarge); 1916-1941 (architects Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson); 1979-82 (architects Hoyle, Doran & Berry); unfinished
- St. Faith's House (New York Training School for Deaconesses/ later Diocesan House) (419 West 110th Street). Built 1909-11; C. Grant LaFarge, architect
- Choir School / later Cathedral School (28 Morningside Drive). Built 1912-13; Cook & Welch, architects
- Synod House (1021 Amsterdam Avenue). Built 1912-14; Ralph Adams Cram, architect
- The Deanery/ later Ogilvie House (1025 Amsterdam Avenue). Built 1913; Ralph Adams Cram, architect Bishop's House/ later Cathedral House (1031 Amsterdam Avenue). Built 1912-14; Ralph Adams Cram, architect

i • Leake & Watts Orphan Asylum Building/ later Old Synod House, Exhibit Hall, Museum of Religious Art, Ithiel Town Building (1043 Amsterdam Avenue). Built 1838-42, Ithiel Town, architect; Samuel Thomson, builder



### TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES REGARDING DESIGNATION OF THE PEOPLE'S TRUST COMPANY BUILDING

May 2, 2017

My name is Lauren George, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). I am here to testify on the designation of the People's Trust Company Building, at 181 Montague Street in Brooklyn, Block 244, Lot 15 in part, as an individual landmark. It was designed by architects Mowbray & Uffinger and built 1904-06.

On November 29, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the People's Trust Company Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Public Hearing Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Seven people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of Council Member Stephen Levin, the Brooklyn Heights Association, the Municipal Art Society of New York, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Historic Districts Council, as well as two individuals. No one spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission also received a written statement of support from Brooklyn Community Board 2.

This imposing one-story, double-height neo-Classical bank building was constructed for the Brooklyn-based People's Trust Company from 1904-1906. The exterior of the building, designed by architects Louis M. Mowbray and Justin M. Uffinger, skillfully blends Greek, Roman, and Renaissance elements and exemplifies turn-of-the-20th-century commercial bank architecture, linking ideas of civic pride, wealth, and stability. A richly carved and detailed pediment rests atop four monolithic lonic columns; at the time of construction, these columns were the largest blocks of marble ever quarried, each weighing 28 tons. Free-standing anthemia and lions-head details further adorn the structure's pediment and roofline. The architects, Mowbray & Uffinger, are responsible for the designs of several New York City landmarks, including the Dime Savings Bank exterior and interior at 9 DeKalb Avenue, Brooklyn.

As one of the first commercial banks built in this section of Brooklyn Heights, the People's Trust Company Building was critical to the development of Bank Row on Montague Street. Today, the building continues its banking tradition by housing a Citibank branch, and remains an essential component of Bank Row. Accordingly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission urges you to affirm this designation. Thank you.

#### DANIEL R. GARODNICK

COUNCIL MEMBER, 471 DISTRICT

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## THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPUTY LEADER

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COMMITTEES

LAND USE
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EDUCATION
RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS
WATERFRONTS

Council Member Peter Koo Chair, Committee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses

May 1, 2017

Dear Chair Koo,

I write in support of the landmark designation of selected interior spaces in the Waldorf Astoria New York Hotel at 301 Park Avenue. The Waldorf Astoria is one of our city's great architectural jewels, and was appropriately designated an individual landmark in 1993. The interiors presented for review today include such beautiful spaces as the Main Lobby, the Grand Ballroom, the Silver Gallery, the Basildon Room, the Jade Room, and the Astor Room, each of which presents unique characteristics, and is well deserving of preservation. On view in those spaces are unique and historic murals, mosaics, and reliefs, along with distinctive period elevators, doors, balustrades, paneling, and other finishes.

I proudly offer my support to granting landmark designation to the hotel's breathtaking and worthy interior spaces. I hope that the Committee, and ultimately the Council, approve this designation.

Sincerety

Daniel R. Garodnick



# Morningside Heights Historic District Committee PO Box 250405 Columbia University Station New York City, NY 10025 historicmorningsideheights.nyc 646 721 4651

May 2, 2017

#### Good morning.

My name is Laura Friedman and I have been an owner and resident of Morningside Heights for 40 years. For half that time, 20 years, our committee has been working toward achieving a historic district in our beautiful neighborhood.

As we stated in our request for evaluation before the Landmark's Preservation Commission,
Morningside Heights' special character is derived from its cohesiveness as a neighborhood bearing
multiple imprints of Beaux-Arts city planning, its diversity of historic buildings encompassing world-class
and neighborhood institutions and middle class apartment houses, and it's elevated topography. Added
to that is the cadre of esteemed architects working in the neighborhood from the late nineteenth and
early twentieth centuries.

People from all over the world come everyday to visit Morningside Heights, one of the jewels in the crown of our proud city. It is a neighborhood that represents, through it's architectural splendor, beautiful parks and many institutions, a unique community in the midst of a thriving city. The amazing thing about Morningside Heights is how this neighborhood exists in the current moment on so many historic and architectural levels. It has an exquisite beauty, which is both manmade and natural.

As President of the Morningside Heights Historic District Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Council Member Mark Levine for his leadership and guidance, Commissioner Srinivassan, Executive Director Sarah Carroll and the staff of LPC whom we have been working with to complete the first phase of a Historic District in our community.

We look forward to working together to complete the final phase of preserving our neighborhood for generations to come.

Thank you.

Gregory Dietrich Testimony re: Proposed Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and the Cathedral Close Landmark Site Designation, City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses Hearing, May 2, 2017:

Good morning. My name is Gregory Dietrich and I am a resident of Morningside Heights, Principal of Gregory Dietrich Preservation Consulting, and an advisor to the Morningside Heights Historic District Committee.

I am testifying in support of the proposed designation of this landmark site. As a twenty-plusyear resident of the Heights, today's hearing is bittersweet to say the least. So first, let me touch on the bitter before I touch on the sweet:

LPC's interest in designating the Close dates back to 1979 and again in 2002, before being thwarted each time by a high-powered board of trustees who successfully prevailed over the City. The last debacle occurred in 2003 with the proposal to designate the footprint of the Cathedral, which not only generated volumes of testimony supporting a larger Close designation, but also was ultimately rejected by your council on the basis that the larger Close merited designation. In its place, the board of trustees drafted a restrictive covenant that led to the more limited designation that is the subject of this hearing.

Today, the experience of the Cathedral has been severely marred by a 20-story glass tower in the southeast parcel of the former Close, which looms higher than the Cathedral itself when viewed from the south; and more recently, by two 15-story Brutalist towers in the north parcel of the former Close, whose combined mass obscures the majority of the Cathedral's French-Gothic-inspired north façade when viewed from multiple angles. These out-of-scale developments on the historic Close are a testament to the destruction that can be wrought in absence of local landmark protection.

As for the sweet, today's designation recognizes that, in spite of these intrusions, there is still a "there" there. This includes the Heights' oldest surviving building: Ithiel Town's Leake & Watts Orphan Asylum from 1843, to the iconic Cathedral, and its eye-filling ensemble of mostly early-20<sup>th</sup>-century, period-revival buildings designed by a cadre of distinguished American architects. Together, these buildings, with their landscaped courtyard and an exquisite open-air pulpit by Howells & Stokes, convey a distinct sense of place that is unrivaled of anywhere in New York City.

I thank City Council for its enduring support of this effort, and I look forward to future designations to ensure that Columbia President Seth Low's vision for the "Acropolis of the New World" is not further debased. Thank you.

#### FOR THE RECORD

#### Yuen, Jeffrey

From:

Judith York Newman <jyorknew@verizon.net>

Sent:

Monday, May 01, 2017 2:03 PM

To:

Yuen, Jeffrey

Subject:

Request re Designation of 542 Cathedral Parkway

To: Members of The Council / The City of New York/ Land Use Division

The building at 542 Cathedral Parkway has received a status of Non- Contributing from the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

I had sent a letter to them with my observations as to why this building should be in fact omitted from the Morningside Heights Historic District.

This is a repeat of that request.

I am a recent owner of this property and a Registered Architect for many years trained at Cornell University and well versed in the historic value of buildings.

The building in question is a modern 3 story townhouse 25 ' wide that was completed in 1988. The facade is of modular panels of glass with wood frames.

The building is only 25' x 40' due to the fact that the lot is only 70' deep. The requirement for a 30' rear setback was not in force when the larger neighboring buildings were constructed. Consequently they impose on this small building with their lot-line walls and very narrow rear yards.

Although there are no immediate plans to change the size of the building at 542, it is possible that the future might call for adding 1 or 2 stories to the

existing building while upgrading some of the materials to be more energy efficient As of right, the building could be 13 stories high.

For some background information, I had an extensive practice in the 1970's when my office re-designed many residential buildings in the West Side Urban Renewal Area. In these brownstones, which often had their interiors gutted for modern installations, I always respected the facade which was restored to maintain the character of the block.

For Cathedral Parkway, I can appreciate the historical value of many of the buildings on the block, but 542 is certainly an oddity.

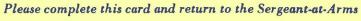
I think whatever criteria exempted the corner modern apartment houses at Broadway and Cathedral Parkway could and should be applied to 542.

Thank you for your consideration.

Judith York Newman jyorknew@verizon.net

## THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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