



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES
REGARDING DESIGNATION OF MOUNT MORRIS PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION
January 12, 2016**

Good morning, Chair Koo and Councilmembers. My name is Michael Owen, Community Outreach Program Manager at the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the designation of the Mount Morris Park Historic District Extension.

On July 21, 2015, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Mount Morris Park Historic District Extension (Item No. 1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Twenty three (23) people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of Congressman Charles B. Rangel, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, Community Board 10, the Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association, Save Harlem Now!, The Society for the Architecture of the City, Former Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Gene A. Norman, and numerous home owners in the proposed district extension area. The Real Estate Board of New York testified in support of designation but questioned the inclusion of certain buildings. The Commission received a support letter from City Council Member Inez E. Dickens, and a statement of support from the New York City Parks Department. Two people spoke in opposition to designation.

On September 22, 2015 the Landmarks Preservation Commission unanimously approved the designation of this 276-building district, bounded roughly by West 123rd Street to the North and West 118th Street to the South, East of Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard and immediately West of the existing Mount Morris Park Historic District (I've included copies of the district map for your reference). The Landmarks Preservation Commission worked quickly and efficiently to designate this extension after calendaring it on April 14, 2015, collaborating closely with community stakeholders and seeking extensive community input.



The proposed historic district extension, which encompasses more than 250 row houses and approximately 12 apartment buildings, shares a character, sense of place and development history with the existing Mount Morris Park Historic District. Combined, these districts include almost 550 landmarked buildings. Many of the architects and developers responsible for structures within the existing historic district were also responsible for the buildings within this extension. Like the Mount Morris Park Historic District, the streets of the historic district extension are lined with masonry row houses of exceptional quality that reflected Harlem's development as an affluent residential community following the extension of rapid transit into the area around 1880. Similar to the existing historic district, the buildings within the extension display a variety of architectural styles popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The buildings in the proposed historic district extension represent many styles of architecture spanning a period of over four decades, from Second Empire, neo-Grec, Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival, Renaissance Revival and Beaux Arts. The earliest buildings in the district are three Second Empire style brick row houses with mansard roofs. Between 1885 and 1889, eighty-eight (88) row houses were erected in the historic district, all are extant. From 1900 to the 1920s, many beautiful apartment buildings were also developed in the neighborhood.

The row houses, mainly built as single-family dwellings, were originally occupied by prosperous middle-class households, but by the turn of the twentieth century, a less-affluent population, consisting mostly of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, began to move in. Many of these residences were eventually converted into rooming houses and small apartment buildings. By the late 1920s, the Mount Morris Park area began to attract a large African American population, becoming an important part of black Harlem and home to numerous prominent black residents. The area today remains one of New York City's most vibrant African American communities.

There have been many actors, artists, community activists, doctors, lawyers, musicians and teachers that have helped to shape the Mount Morris Park community. Some of the prominent residents include:

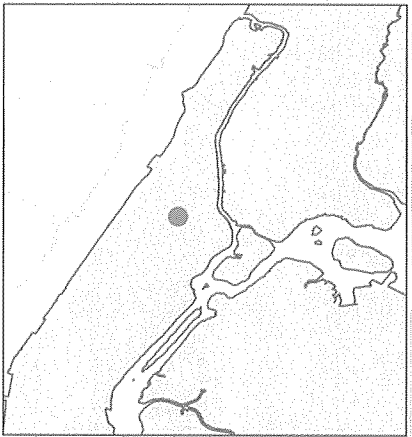
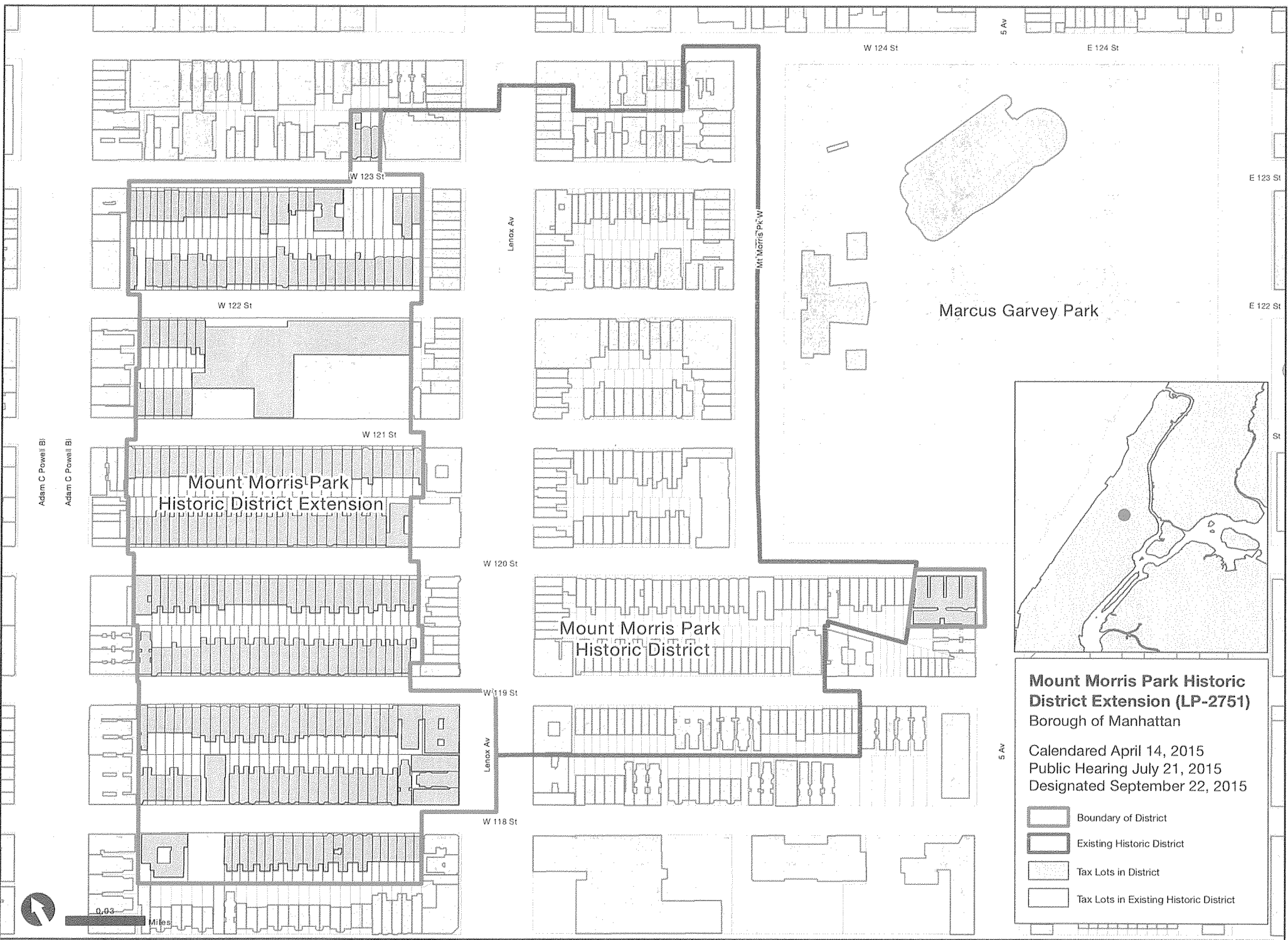
Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

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pioneering photographer James Van Der Zee (1886-1983); Hale House founder “Mother” Clara Hale (1905-1992); screenwriter, television producer, novelist and sports writer Bud Wilson Schulberg (1914-2009); actress, screenwriter and producer Gertrude Berg (1899-1966); and television and film actress Ann Marie Horsford (1947-). The remarkable Watson family also lived in the district, whose head James S. Watson (1882-1952) was one of the first African Americans elected to judicial office, and whose wife Violet Lopez Watson (1893-1971) founded the National Council of Negro Women with Mary McLeod Bethune in 1935. Their son Douglas Watson (1920-1973) was the first African American aeronautical engineer in the US, while their daughter Barbara Watson (1918-1983) became the first African American woman appointed Assistant Secretary of State in 1966, and son James Watson (1922-2001) was a NY State Senator, US Customs Court Judge and Federal Judge at the Court of International Trade.

Many of the houses in the neighborhood retain a high degree of integrity. Together, the buildings within the Mount Morris Park Historic District Extension represent a cohesive unit whose quality, design and workmanship create an exceptional character and strong sense of place. On September 22, 2015, the Commission unanimously designated the Mount Morris Park Historic District Extension. Accordingly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission urges you to affirm this designation.



Mount Morris Park Historic District Extension (LP-2751)
 Borough of Manhattan

Calendared April 14, 2015
 Public Hearing July 21, 2015
 Designated September 22, 2015

-  Boundary of District
-  Existing Historic District
-  Tax Lots in District
-  Tax Lots in Existing Historic District

INEZ E. DICKENS

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January 12, 2016

Harlem's Mount Morris Park first received historic designation from New York City's Landmark Preservation Commission in 1971, and today we look to expand this remarkably important districts total footprint to encompass the whole of Mount Morris Park from Marcus Garvey Park toward Adam Clayton Powell Blvd, North at 124th Street south toward 118th Street. The expanded district will include 271 architecturally significant row houses and apartment buildings constructed during the late 1800's and 1900's.

The vitality of this district was kept intact by the members of the Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association, and the Marcus Garvey Park Alliance. Both institutions were led by individuals who staunchly defended the character and tradition of their community. I think we should all applaud the hard work of Patricia Bates-Eaton, Harold Dolly, Valerie Jo Bradley and the late District Leader Hilda Stokely for fighting for the preservation of Mount Morris Park. This district has been home to world renowned personalities like Marcus Samelson, Kareem Abdul Jabaar, and Maya Angelou to call this community home.

I fully support this measure and ask my colleagues to please do the same.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Inez E. Dickens".

Inez E. Dickens
9th Council District

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HORACE FELIX

Address: 139 W 122ND ST

I represent: Homeowner

Address: 137 W 122ND ST

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Mount Morris in favor in opposition
Historic District

Date: 1/12/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Owen

Address: 1 Centre Street

I represent: Landmarks Preservation Commission

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

mt. morris HD in favor in opposition

Date: 1/12/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LISA KERSAVAGE

Address: _____

I represent: LPC

Address: 1 CENTRE, 911 FL

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms