

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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May 2, 2017  
Start: 11:55 a.m.  
Recess: 1:07 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  
David G. Greenfield  
Mark Levine

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

Lauren George  
Director  
Intergovernmental and Community Affairs  
Landmarks Preservation Commission

Kate Lemos McHale  
Director  
Research  
Landmarks Preservation Commission

Victoria Mason-Ailey  
Associate Vice President  
Planning and Community Affairs  
Columbia University

Gregory Dietrich  
Morningside Heights Resident,  
Principal  
Gregory Dietrich Preservation Consulting

Larry Schwartz  
Member  
Morningside Heights Historic District  
Council

Laura Friedman  
Morningside Heights Resident,  
President  
Morningside Heights Historic District  
Council

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

Daniel Victor  
Congregation Ramath Orah

Clifton Daniel  
Dean  
Cathedral of St. John the Divine

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND  
2 MARITIME USES

4

2 [sound check]

3 [gavel]

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Good morning. I am  
5 Council Member Koo, Chair of the Subcommittee on  
6 Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses. We are  
7 joined by Council Members Palma, Mendez and Levin.  
8 Today we are holding a public hearing on five  
9 designations by the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
10 submitted to the Council pursuant to Section 3020 of  
11 the City Charter. The designations include four  
12 individual landmarks and a historic district.

13 We are also joined by our Chair of the  
14 Land Use Committee, Council Member Greenfield.

15 The items we will consider are as  
16 follows:

17 The first item is LU 602, the People's  
18 Trust Company Building located at 181 Montague Street  
19 in Council Member Levin's district in Brooklyn. The  
20 Council Member has indicated he supports this  
21 designation.

22 The second item is LU 603, the National  
23 Title Guaranty Company Building at 185 Montague  
24 Street, also in Council Member Levin's district in  
25

2 Brooklyn. The Council Member has indicated he  
3 supports this designation as well.

4 The third item which we are hearing to  
5 consider is the Morningside Heights Historic District  
6 in Council Member Levine's district, consisting of  
7 approximately 115 residential and institutional  
8 buildings in the **[inaudible]** area generally bounded  
9 by 108 Street, Amsterdam Avenue, 119 Street, and  
10 Riverside Drive. Once one of the most remote parts  
11 of the city, beginning in the late 1880s, it became  
12 home to a long list of religious, educational and  
13 medical institutions, including Barnard College,  
14 Teachers College, Union and Jewish Theological  
15 Seminary, and St. Luke's Hospital, earning the  
16 neighborhood the nickname "the acropolis of New  
17 York."

18 The Morningside Heights Historic District  
19 **[inaudible]** for its **[inaudible]** apartment buildings  
20 designed by some of the most prominent residential  
21 architects of the day in a range of revival styles  
22 popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.  
23 The district is also notable for its many row houses  
24 which in addition to the apartment buildings  
25 illustrate the rapid evolution of the middle classes

2 living in Manhattan during the early 20th century.

3 According to LPC, there has been very little new  
4 construction in the district since the 1940s.

5 The fourth item is to consider individual  
6 landmark designation, The Cathedral of St. John the  
7 Divine and Cathedral Close located at 1047 Amsterdam,  
8 also in Council Member Levine's district in  
9 Manhattan.

10 The fifth item is also to consider  
11 individual landmark designation interiors of Waldorf-  
12 Astoria, located at 301 Park Avenue in Council Member  
13 Garodnick's district in Manhattan. The Council  
14 Member has submitted a letter in support of the  
15 designation that I will now read into the record.

16 Council Member Peter Koo

17 Chair, Committee on Landmarks, Public  
18 Siting and Maritime Uses

19 May 1, 2017

20 Dr. Chair Koo,

21 "I write in support of the landmark  
22 designation of selected interior spaces in the  
23 Waldorf Astoria New York Hotel at 301 Park Avenue.  
24 The Waldorf Astoria is one of our city's great  
25 architectural jewels, and was appropriately

2 designated an individual landmark in 1993. The  
3 interiors presented for review today include such  
4 beautiful spaces as the Main Lobby, the Grand  
5 Ballroom, the Silver Gallery, the Basildon Room, the  
6 Jade Room, and the Astor Room, each of which presents  
7 unique characteristics, and is well deserving of  
8 preservation. On view of these spaces are unique and  
9 historic murals, mosaics, and reliefs, along with  
10 distinctive period elevators, doors, balustrades,  
11 paneling, and other finishes.

12 I proudly offer my support to granting  
13 landmark designation to the hotel's breathtaking and  
14 worthy interior spaces. I hope that the Committee,  
15 and ultimately the Council, approves this  
16 designation."

17 Sincerely,

18 Daniel R. Garodnick

19 Now Council Member Levin will make a  
20 statement on LU Item 603.

21 Thank you very much, Chair Koo. So I  
22 wanna just quickly express my support for the  
23 landmarking of People's Trust Company Building and  
24 the National Title Guaranty Company Building at 181  
25 and 185 Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights. These

2 two properties, these two buildings get it so that we  
3 are very, very close, if not all the way there, at  
4 the full Brooklyn Heights completion for landmarking  
5 in what is the first landmark district in New York  
6 City and it's taken all these years, since 1965, to  
7 encompass these two exclusive buildings. So I'm in  
8 full support; I wanna thank Brooklyn Heights  
9 Association for all their hard work; particularly I  
10 wanna thank Otis Pearsall, Otis and Nancy Pearsall,  
11 who hopefully they're watching either on television  
12 or online, so I wanna acknowledge their diligence and  
13 their hard work and working with LPC staff and  
14 commissioners to make this happen, and so I wanna  
15 indicate my full support. I wanna thank all the LPC  
16 staff who worked on this as well. Thank you very  
17 much, Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you Council  
19 Member. I will now open the public hearing on Items  
20 602, 603 and the Waldorf-Astoria Interior Design.

21 LPC will present on these items  
22 altogether in one presentation. We will then hear  
23 testimony from the public on each item individually.  
24 We have Lauren George and Kate McHale from Landmarks  
25 Commission. Please.. [crosstalk]



2 LAUREN GEORGE: Good morning.

3 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Please identify  
4 yourself and start.

5 LAUREN GEORGE: Good morning Chairman Koo  
6 and Council Members. My name is Lauren George from  
7 the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Thank you for  
8 the opportunity to testify today on the Commission's  
9 designation of 181 and 185 Montague Street, both  
10 designated by the Commission on January 24th of this  
11 year. I'd like to briefly describe the context of  
12 these two buildings before going into detail about  
13 each.

14 These adjacent properties are located in  
15 downtown Brooklyn, just outside the Brooklyn Heights  
16 Historic District, as Council Member Levin alluded  
17 to, to the west and the Borough Hall Skyscraper  
18 District to the south and east.

19 For nearly a century, this section of  
20 Montague Street, between Clinton and Court has been  
21 known as "Bank Row," with banks, insurance companies  
22 and real estate agencies locating close to Borough  
23 Hall, which providing services to the growing  
24 population of Brooklyn Heights. The Brooklyn  
25 Skyscraper Historic District includes several bank-

2 related buildings on the south side of Montague  
3 Street.

4 The Brooklyn Trust Company, the leftmost  
5 building in each image, was the first of these grand  
6 Bank Row buildings to be designated a landmark in  
7 1996. Montague Street has historically been a  
8 connector between Civic and Residential and these  
9 latest two landmark designations anchor this block of  
10 Montague and are critical to the distinctive historic  
11 character of Bank Row.

12 Though they were built a quarter century  
13 apart, both the People's Trust and the National Title  
14 Guaranty Buildings rose during banking booms and are  
15 stunning examples of the optimistic architecture of  
16 their times, one looking to the past in the  
17 neoclassical style to convey civic pride, wealth and  
18 stability and one Art Deco style skyscraper looking  
19 to the future of growth and success.

20 The People's Trust Company Building at  
21 181 Montague was designated unanimously by the  
22 Commission on January 24th.

23 At the public hearing on November 29th,  
24 seven people spoke in favor of designation, including  
25 representatives of Council Member Levin, Historic

2 Districts Council, Municipal Art Society, the New  
3 York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Brooklyn Heights  
4 Association. The Commission also received a letter  
5 of support from Community Board 2. No one spoke in  
6 opposition to designation.

7 The landmark site is a lot in part,  
8 you'll note, as shown here with a solid red line, and  
9 reflects the footprint of the People's Trust Building  
10 as constructed prior to a 1929 annex built on two  
11 off-access rear lots.

12 The People's Trust Company Building is an  
13 imposing neoclassical bank constructed for the  
14 Brooklyn-based People's Trust Company, from 1904-  
15 1906. Designed by architects Mowbray and Uffinger,  
16 it skillfully blends Greek, Roman and Renaissance  
17 elements and exemplifies turn-of-the-20th-century  
18 bank architecture, linking ideas of civic pride,  
19 wealth and stability. The City of Brooklyn grew  
20 rapidly in the decades following the Civil War,  
21 creating a high demand for banks, real estate agents  
22 and insurance companies locating close to Brooklyn  
23 City Hall.

24 The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge in  
25 1883 and construction of elevated rail lines and the

2 expansion of the streetcar network further influenced  
3 the evolution of Brooklyn Heights. People's Trust  
4 Company was erected in 1904, at the height of the  
5 transformation of Montague into a major commercial  
6 artery.

7 As one of the first financial  
8 institutions built in this section of Brooklyn  
9 Heights, it was essential to the development of Bank  
10 Row. Each of the four columns in this façade is made  
11 from a single piece of marble and were reportedly the  
12 largest blocks of marble ever quarried; each weighing  
13 28 tons. Resting on these four columns is a richly  
14 carved and detailed pediment.

15 As one of the first commercial banks in  
16 Brooklyn Heights, the People's Trust was a critical  
17 part of Bank Row and again today the building  
18 continues this tradition by housing a Citibank  
19 branch. Accordingly the Landmarks Commission urges  
20 you to affirm this designation today.

21 The National Title Guaranty Building at  
22 185 Montague was designated unanimously by the  
23 Commission also on January 24th and at a public  
24 hearing seven people also spoke in support of this  
25 designation, including many of the same

2 representatives -- Council Member Levin, Historic  
3 Districts Council, Municipal Art Society, the  
4 Brooklyn Heights Association, the Conservancy, and  
5 Community Board 2.

6           Constructed from 1929-1930, this  
7 limestone and brick building is notable for its  
8 strong massing and decorative details. The 16-story  
9 Art Deco style building was designed by Corbett,  
10 Harrison & MacMurray, led by senior partner Harvey  
11 Wiley Corbett, a major proponent of the skyscraper as  
12 a modern urban form. The firm is responsible for  
13 many notable NYC landmarked buildings, including  
14 Rockefeller Center. The design emphasizes  
15 verticality, with a slender brick shaft that rises 13  
16 stories before the central bays extend for another  
17 three stories in a series of setbacks.

18           The central feature of this building is a  
19 pierced limestone screen designed by the noted  
20 sculptor Rene Paul Chambellan in which stylized  
21 elements indicative of security and industry are  
22 incorporated into the buttresses and around the  
23 building's entrances.

24           Chambellan was an important architectural  
25 sculptor, whose work embellishes many designated

2 landmarks, including the Chanin Building and also  
3 Rockefeller Center.

4 Over the years, the National Title  
5 Guaranty Company Building has been remarkably well  
6 maintained. Significant for its strongly defined  
7 massing and elegant pierced screen, the Art Deco  
8 style building, along with the neighboring People's  
9 Bank and the previously designed Brooklyn Trust  
10 Building on the corner, form an important ensemble of  
11 early 20th century commercial buildings from the  
12 period when Montague was the center of Brooklyn's  
13 financial services industry. Thank you.

14 And now we'll move, as we've indicated,  
15 to the Waldorf; is that correct? Actually..

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Chair Greenfield wants  
17 to read some remarks.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I have... Yeah,  
19 I have a question, actually; I'm genuinely curious  
20 about... Can you pull up the photos of the... [interpose]

21 LAUREN GEORGE: Yes. Alright. The Art  
22 Deco building? Which building would you like...?  
23 [crosstalk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah.  
25 Montague Street. The last one.

2 LAUREN GEORGE: There you go.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah, right  
4 before... right after that. There you go. There's a  
5 very distinctive, interesting feature over here,  
6 splash of blue in the front of that building; can you  
7 tell me what that blue coloring is in front of that  
8 Art Deco building?

9 LAUREN GEORGE: Are you referring to the  
10 Citi Bike?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I am indeed,  
12 yes, thank you very much... [crosstalk]

13 LAUREN GEORGE: facility..

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yes.

15 LAUREN GEORGE: installation?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Exactly. I'm  
17 actually seriously curious about this. Do the owners  
18 of Citi Bike, Department of Transportation, do they  
19 consult with you before they decide to plop down one  
20 of those in front of a historic building?

21 LAUREN GEORGE: There is actually an  
22 agreement; I believe a citywide agreement; so it's  
23 not a site by site consultation, as far as I'm aware.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: What is the  
25 citywide agreement?

2 LAUREN GEORGE: Again, I would have to...  
3 not again; I think DOT is better suited to answer  
4 these questions, but in terms of our role and our  
5 understanding of where DOT selects their sitings, we  
6 have to respond **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: No, I ask it  
8 very seriously, because obviously it has... I mean if  
9 you have a building that is landmarked and you're  
10 trying to retain that landmark feature of the  
11 building, by flopping in front of it a new structure  
12 of a bunch of, you know, rather blasé blue bikes,  
13 you're not exactly contributing to the scenic visual  
14 of that particular landmark, so I'm curious as to  
15 whether there is an agreement or not and how that  
16 would be impacted, specifically by a landmarking that  
17 took place after those bikes... [crosstalk]

18 LAUREN GEORGE: So as an indi...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: have already  
20 been installed there.

21 LAUREN GEORGE: Right. So as an  
22 individual designation, our regulatory jurisdiction  
23 does not cover the street and it does not even cover  
24 the sidewalk **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]



2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: No, I'm well  
3 aware, but you... [crosstalk]

4 LAUREN GEORGE: In historic districts  
5 it's different, I think...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah.

7 LAUREN GEORGE: for an individual we  
8 would not have any say.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Your agency  
10 is part of the de Blasio Administration; is that  
11 correct?

12 LAUREN GEORGE: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: And the  
14 Department of Transportation; are they part of the de  
15 Blasio Administration as well...? [crosstalk]

16 LAUREN GEORGE: Indeed.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay. That's  
18 my point, you guys, if you're not talking, you should  
19 be talking about these issues.

20 LAUREN GEORGE: Thank you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: You're  
22 welcome, but I'd like a follow-up, so can you send us  
23 a note and let us know, and if not, have the DOT send  
24 us and let us know what is the official or unofficial  
25 rule in regards to both historic districts and

2 individual designations as to changing the  
3 streetscape, including by making changes that impact  
4 on the visual appearance of these historic buildings?

5 LAUREN GEORGE: Will do.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'm looking  
7 forward to that. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: I wanna recognize  
9 Council Member Barron on our committee and then...  
10 [background comment] yeah. Sure, yeah. And then  
11 Council Member Mendez wants to ask some questions.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: No. No; I... I  
13 have... I can answer his question... [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Well you can... go ahead.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: So I'm sorry,  
16 Council Member Barron, but I... [crosstalk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you for  
18 taking the fun out of my hearing.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: I... I have...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: It's  
21 cheating. There's no passes, there's no like hand-  
22 off, tap, say uh call a friend. Isn't like, you know  
23 dial a buddy; I need some help over here on a  
24 millionaire show.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Yeah, but I can  
3 answer your question... [crosstalk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'm... I'm...  
5 I'm... I'm joking, Council Member. Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: And...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Lifeline,  
8 exactly.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: So I've dealt  
10 with these Citi Bikes a lot, either removing them or  
11 adding extra ones, and it always comes down to -- my  
12 community boards are very active and so if the  
13 community boards and other people raise an objection  
14 -- we've raised it with DOT -- and if you raise an  
15 objection like a landmark building exterior,  
16 interior, whatever; DOT will take that into  
17 consideration, but if no one raises it, they would  
18 not know that they are putting something in front of  
19 a landmark exterior. So I've been successfully able  
20 to remove Citi Bikes... [crosstalk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: From  
22 landmarks?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: and put... yes, in  
24 front of...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: landmarks or in  
3 front of a gate that looks closed but really opens  
4 into a community garden...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: and I've been  
7 able to put more Citi Bikes in other places and sort  
8 of switch them around, so...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Good  
10 suggestion... [crosstalk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: But I think the  
12 agency should really... DOT should be reporting to the  
13 agency or giving you some kind of list so that you  
14 can double-check, sort of like the way DOB has an "L"  
15 when it's a landmarked building on their website; DOT  
16 should have something similar, because it is kind of  
17 an eyesore, not kind of; it is an eyesore...

18 [crosstalk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Disgusting,  
20 actually. Yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: And I'm sorry,  
22 Council Member Barron, but I thought it was important  
23 just to... [background comment] Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Any more questions from  
25 members? Seeing none. Are there members of the

2 public who wish to testify on these items? Seeing  
3 none. This public hearing on these three items is  
4 now closed. I will now couple LU 602, 603 and the  
5 Preconsidered LU relating to the designation of  
6 Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Interiors for a vote to approve  
7 these items.

8 LAUREN GEORGE: Uh Chairman...

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Go ahead.

10 LAUREN GEORGE: We haven't presented yet  
11 on Waldorf.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Oh okay, yeah. I'm  
13 sorry... [crosstalk]

14 LAUREN GEORGE: We will now though.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Please go ahead, yeah.

16 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Good morning Chair  
17 and Council Members. My name is Kate Lemos McHale  
18 with the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

19 The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel is one of New  
20 York City's most prominent and culturally significant  
21 hotels, its exterior was designated an individual  
22 landmark in 1993 and a collection of significant  
23 interiors were designated as an interior landmark on  
24 March 7, 2017. At our public hearing held on January  
25 24, 2017, eight people testified in support of the

2 designation, including representatives of the New  
3 York Landmarks Conservancy, Art Deco Society of New  
4 York, and Historic Districts Council. Council member  
5 Daniel R. Garodnick, State Senator Brad Hoylman,  
6 Community Board 5, and Historic Park Avenue submitted  
7 testimony in support of designation. The Commission  
8 also received 33 pieces of correspondence, as well as  
9 a petition signed by 826 people, all supporting  
10 designation.

11 The hotel occupies a full city block,  
12 seen here between Park and Lex and 49th and 50th  
13 Streets. It was designed by prominent hotel designer  
14 Schultze & Weaver and construction began in 1929 and  
15 the hotel opened in 1931. More than 600 feet tall,  
16 the Waldorf contained more than 2,000 guest rooms,  
17 including numerous suites for long-term tenants.

18 The designated interior spaces represent  
19 the most significant interiors and the corridors that  
20 connect them. Entering the hotel from Park or  
21 Lexington Avenue, these connected spaces flow  
22 seamlessly without interruption, expanding and  
23 contracting, from the ground floor to the ballroom  
24 level on the third floor.

2 The processional roof through the hotel's  
3 great publicly accessible spaces begins in the Park  
4 Avenue and Lexington Avenue entrance foyers, shown  
5 here, these introduce many of the decorative motifs  
6 and finishes found throughout the designated  
7 interiors; in particular, the distinctive nickel  
8 bronze metalwork.

9 The designated first floor interiors  
10 include the primary processional route through the  
11 hotel, the Park Avenue Lobby and colonnade, the West  
12 Lounge, which was originally called Peacock Alley,  
13 the west elevator lobby, the main lobby, the main  
14 lobby, the main lobby hall, the east arcade, and the  
15 Lexington Avenue stairs and landing.

16 The Park Avenue Lobby is a gracious two-  
17 story entrance hall volume with monumental columns,  
18 decorative metalwork, murals, and a floor mosaic by  
19 the French artist Louis Rigal. The focus of the  
20 first floor is the main lobby, located at the center  
21 of the block. This dramatic interior features dark  
22 marble columns and a stunning plaster ceiling. At  
23 the east end of the first floor near Lexington Avenue  
24 we find historic elevators and the beautiful  
25 Lexington Avenue staircase ascending to the third

2 floor, which includes the Grand Ballroom, the  
3 ballroom foyer, the ballroom entrance hall, and a  
4 series of smaller ballrooms. These interconnected  
5 spaces were designed to provide flexible use for any  
6 size event. And some of these finer rooms --  
7 originally the Silver Gallery, the Ballroom Entrance  
8 Hall, is a mirrored corridor with a black and white  
9 mosaic floor that links four ballrooms; it contains  
10 murals that were brought to this hotel from the  
11 original Waldorf-Astoria. The grand ballroom is one  
12 of the largest event spaces in New York City; it can  
13 accommodate more than 1,500 guests. Arranged on  
14 three levels, it has two tiers of projecting  
15 balconies and an elaborate ceiling. This fabled room  
16 has hosted countless dinners, banquets, galas and  
17 events, including the annual Alfred E. Smith Dinner,  
18 a fundraiser for Catholic charities that  
19 traditionally attracts major presidential candidates,  
20 as well as ceremonies associated with the Rock and  
21 Roll Hall of Fame and the Friars Club. The third  
22 floor also contains the Basildon Room from a 1770s  
23 housing Berkshire, England, as well as the more  
24 understated Jade Room and Astor Gallery.



2 Many of the hotel's memorable interiors  
3 have had alterations and exhibit new finishes.  
4 Nonetheless, most retain their original dimension and  
5 share such distinctive elements as gilded  
6 plasterwork, nickel bronze metalwork, glazed doors,  
7 mirrored walls, and various types of exotic marble  
8 and wood paneling.

9 The Waldorf-Astoria is one of only two  
10 major early 20th century hotels in New York City that  
11 have preserved most of their original interiors.

12 While the Plaza Hotel features renaissance revival  
13 style decorations, the Waldorf is unique for  
14 containing some of the finest and most varied Art  
15 Deco interiors in New York City. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. This is  
17 really very beautiful and indeed we should landmark  
18 all these interior items. Thank you very much.

19 So I will now close LU 602, 603 and  
20 Preconsidered LU relating to the designation of  
21 Waldorf-Astoria Interiors for a vote to approve these  
22 items. Counsel, please call the roll.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Koo.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: I vote aye.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Palma.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Aye.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member  
4 Mendez.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Aye.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Levin.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Aye.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member  
9 Barron.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I vote aye.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: With a vote of 5 in  
12 the affirmative, 0 in the negative; with 0  
13 abstentions, the items are recommended for approval  
14 by the Full Land Use Committee.

15 [background comments]

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: We will leave the vote  
17 open for another 15-20 minutes. Thank you very much.

18 [pause]

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: I will now recognize  
20 Council Member Levine to give a statement about the  
21 designations in his district.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very  
23 much, Chair Koo, it's wonderful to have my maiden  
24 presentation of a landmarks district in your  
25 committee, I'm very excited about this. We're

2 considering today the Morningside Heights Historic  
3 District. This is a community that probably as much  
4 as any other in New York City is defined by its  
5 history, by its connection to the built environment;  
6 it's a neighborhood that largely sprung up in a very  
7 concentrated period of time from about 1900 to 1915,  
8 as the subway arrived, and it's given the community a  
9 really cohesive architectural identity, which is  
10 really quite spectacular, particularly around  
11 Riverside Drive, Cathedral Parkway, along Broadway  
12 where apartment houses sprung up at that time, and  
13 also not too far away in places like Morningside  
14 Drive and adjacent side streets where more middle  
15 class housing was built. But this is a community  
16 that's really under threat because of rising real  
17 estate values and ever-increasing demand for space.  
18 There is real pressure for development in Morningside  
19 Heights, as much as anywhere in the City, and to give  
20 us a sense of the risk, you need look no further than  
21 two very modern buildings which have emerged on the  
22 campus of the Cathedral St. John the Divine, known as  
23 The Close, two very, very modern, out of context  
24 apartment buildings and we fear that that could be

2 just the beginning of many other such developments in  
3 the neighborhood.

4           So I'm very excited about this district  
5 which has come very far, thanks to great partnership  
6 by LPC and really 20 years of advocacy by community  
7 leaders, it's just amazing how strategic and  
8 relentless they have been -- some are here today;  
9 you'll hear from them -- we wouldn't be here if it  
10 weren't for that 20 years of work, but I'm pleased at  
11 the prospect of preserving what I think is well over  
12 100 buildings; perhaps you all can give us the exact  
13 number, but a very, very significant piece of  
14 preservation. There is more work to do in  
15 Morningside Heights; I hope this won't be the end,  
16 but this is a great first step and again, I truly  
17 want to extend my thanks to the Commission, who has  
18 been tremendous partners for us throughout this very  
19 windy, curvy process, at least during the three years  
20 that I've been here. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

21           CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you Council  
22 Member. Now we will proceed with the presentation.  
23 Wait, wait. We are also joined by Council Member  
24 Kallos, who's going to make a vote.

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME  
USES 29

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: On items 602, 603 and  
3 Preconsidered LU related to the interiors of the  
4 Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Council Member Kallos, how do  
5 you vote?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Proudly vote aye,  
7 especially for the Waldorf-Astoria interior.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: By a vote of 6 in the  
9 affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0 opposed, the  
10 items are recommended for approval by the Full Land  
11 Use Committee.

12 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Okay. Thank you.

13 On February 21, 2017, the Landmarks  
14 Commission voted to designate the Morningside Heights  
15 Historic District. The district consists of  
16 approximately 115 buildings that represent both  
17 architecturally and historically the development of  
18 Morningside Heights as a cohesive neighborhood of  
19 apartment buildings and row houses in the early 20th  
20 century.

21 AT the public hearing on December 6,  
22 2016, 33 people spoke in support, including Council  
23 Member Mark Levine and representatives of Assembly  
24 Member Daniel O'Donnell, Representative Jerrold  
25 Nadler, and Borough President Gale Brewer. Barnard

2 College, Columbia University, which owns a larger  
3 percentage of properties in the district, and REBNY  
4 supported the district. Columbia, however, and  
5 REBNY, and three property owners raised some  
6 questions about inclusion of specific buildings.  
7 Additionally, the Commission received correspondence  
8 supporting the designation from then State Senator  
9 Bill Perkins and four petitions in support and four  
10 letters concerning the inclusion of specific  
11 buildings, and the Commission was very grateful for  
12 the collaboration that we had over the past many  
13 years with the Council Member and with the community  
14 advocates in Morningside Heights.

15           The boundaries in Morningside Heights  
16 Historic District extend from West 109th Street to  
17 West 119th Street; Riverside Drive to Amsterdam  
18 Avenue. It was drawn to encompass the greatest  
19 number of intact residential buildings representing  
20 the most significant period of development within  
21 Morningside Heights from the 1890s to the early  
22 1930s. We thought to exclude intrusions along and  
23 adjacent to Broadway -- which you can see here in our  
24 map -- intrusions were defined as more recent  
25 buildings, heavily altered or commercial buildings.

2 Known as the acropolis of New York in the  
3 early 20th century, Morningside Heights remained  
4 largely undeveloped in the 19th century, except for  
5 two large institutions -- the Leake and Watts Orphan  
6 Asylum, which is on the site of St. John the Divine,  
7 and New York Hospital's Bloomingdale Insane Asylum  
8 where Columbia University is now located.

9 Residential development began with row houses and  
10 small multiple dwellings in the 19th century in the  
11 district.

12 Twenty-two buildings of this period are  
13 included in the historic district, constructed in the  
14 1890s; the row houses were all designed in popular  
15 revival styles of the time and represent a late phase  
16 of row house development in the city. They have all  
17 retained their historic appearances and contribute  
18 the character of the district.

19 The arrival of the subway in 1904 spurred  
20 large-scale development in Morningside Heights and by  
21 1910 the area was rapidly transforming into a dense  
22 urban neighborhood with apartment buildings marketed  
23 to the middle class. After this initial burst of  
24 development, 18 residential and institutional  
25 buildings were built between 1911 and 1931.

2                   During this early 20th century  
3 development, apartment buildings in a variety of  
4 styles by some of the city's most prominent  
5 architects line the avenues and streets of the  
6 district, including Cathedral Parkway, West 116th  
7 Street, Riverside Drive, and Broadway. Residential  
8 buildings were also joined by clubs erected to serve  
9 the needs of the academic community, as well as  
10 institutional buildings. Among the district's three  
11 institutional buildings, two are houses of worship  
12 built during the primary period of development to  
13 serve the community and contribute to the  
14 architectural and cultural significance of  
15 Morningside Heights. Houses of worship have  
16 regularly been included in similar residential  
17 historic districts.

18                   In summary, the proposed Morningside  
19 Heights Historic District reflects a period of  
20 remarkable residential development in Manhattan with  
21 its array of well-maintained apartment buildings,  
22 houses, clubs, and places of worship designed in the  
23 popular styles of the 20th century by some of the  
24 city's most prominent architects. Thank you.



2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Any members wanna ask  
3 questions? Seeing none.

4 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Thank you. Should we  
5 do St. John the Divine or do you wanna...

6 [background comments]

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes. Yes.

8 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Okay.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Is there one more.

10 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: One more. Sorry;  
11 it's a lot.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: I have a cold

13 **[inaudible]**.

14 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Alright. One of the  
15 great religious complexes of the world, the Cathedral  
16 Church of St. John the Divine and the Cathedral Close  
17 serve as the seat of the Episcopal Diocese of New  
18 York and constitute one of the outstanding  
19 ecclesiastical ensembles in the city.

20 The Cathedral and Close were designated  
21 as an individual landmark on February 21st, 2017. At  
22 the public hearing on December 6, 2016, eight people  
23 testified in favor of designation, including New York  
24 City Council Member Mark Levine, the Dean of the  
25 Cathedral, who gave enthusiastic support, as well as

2 representatives of the New York Landmarks  
3 Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, and the  
4 Morningside Heights Committee.

5 The complex consists of the Cathedral  
6 Church and six buildings that form the Close,  
7 including the Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum building,  
8 St. Faith's House, the Choir School, Synod House, the  
9 Deanery, and the Bishop's House.

10 The entire site of the Cathedral and  
11 Close was originally occupied by the Leake and Watts  
12 Orphan Asylum which sold the property to the church  
13 in 1887. Built in 1838-42, the Leake and Watts  
14 Orphanage (shown here) is the oldest building in  
15 Morningside Heights and one of the most significant  
16 examples of Greek Revival style institutional  
17 buildings surviving in New York City; it has served a  
18 variety of cathedral functions over the years.

19 The first building the church began  
20 constructing on the site is the Cathedral itself,  
21 which is the centerpiece of the complex. In 1888,  
22 the architectural firm of Heins & LaFarge won a major  
23 architectural competition for the new cathedral. The  
24 first phase of construction began in 1892 and  
25

2 continued to 1911 when the crypt, choir and crossing  
3 were completed -- as shown here.

4 Changes in taste and the death of Heins  
5 in 1907 brought a new fresh Gothic design for the  
6 completion of the Cathedral by Ralph Adams Cram and  
7 his firm Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson.

8 Work resumed in 1916 according to Cram's  
9 design. During this period, which continued until  
10 1941, when Bishop Thomas Manning donated the  
11 remaining iron and steel to support the war effort,  
12 the nave was completed and joined by the choir by a  
13 rough-finished crossing, the imposing west front was  
14 added, and the north transept was begun. After a  
15 decades-long hiatus, work resumed in 1979 on the  
16 towers of the west front. Although the Cathedral  
17 remains unfinished, it nevertheless is one of the  
18 largest religious buildings in the world, it's  
19 monumental size, lofty location above Morningside  
20 Park and the fine stone detailing creates one of the  
21 most impressive architectural statements in the city.

22 Other buildings included in the  
23 designation are the Collegiate Gothic style St.  
24 Faith's House, designed by C. Grant LaFarge and built  
25 in 1909-11 as home for the New York Training School

2 for Deaconesses. The Choir School of 1912-13 was  
3 designed by the firm of Cook & Welch and housed a  
4 school to educate boys who would sing in the  
5 Cathedral choir. Synod House, built 1912-14, was  
6 designed by Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson and built to  
7 host the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal  
8 Church. This auditorium has been the site of many  
9 events for the church over the years. The Deanery,  
10 also by Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, was built in 1913  
11 and served as the home of the Dean of the Cathedral.  
12 And finally, the Bishop's House, built in 1912-14,  
13 also by Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, is the residence of  
14 the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York City.

15 The Cathedral of St. John the Divine and  
16 the Cathedral Close form one of the great and most  
17 well-known religious complexes in the world. In  
18 seeking to protect this ensemble of buildings, the  
19 designation recognizes the Cathedral and Close's  
20 significance as an interconnected complex that has  
21 grown organically and will continue to evolve over  
22 time. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Council  
24 Member Levine, you wanna make a statement?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Sure, thank you,  
3 Chair Koo.

4 So this is also in my district. I think  
5 the landmarks law was probably written to preserve an  
6 incredible structure like this, it's spectacular,  
7 world-class; it's really kind of the center of  
8 gravity of the community; it's so deeply woven into  
9 the identity of the surrounding neighborhood, so this  
10 approval is a slam dunk. I will say though that I  
11 have a twinge of sadness in approving this because of  
12 what we couldn't do, which is preserve the entire --  
13 they call it the Close or Campus -- and if you were  
14 looking at the outline -- Could you maybe flip back  
15 just one? You'll notice there's cutouts on the north  
16 and in the southeast because of two areas that now  
17 have large, modern apartment buildings that are not  
18 consistent with the historic character of the  
19 neighborhood, so -- and for people who are wondering  
20 why it took till 2017 to landmark such an obvious  
21 beautiful building and the Cathedral and the  
22 surrounding buildings, it was that dispute which tied  
23 this up I think for, I don't know, a decade or two  
24 maybe, certainly long before I got here.

2 So having acknowledged my regret on that  
3 front, I will close by saying my appreciation to the  
4 Commission and to the Cathedral for being willing to  
5 landmark the remaining buildings and grounds it's a  
6 very, very important designation for our city. Thank  
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Chair Greenfield has  
9 some questions.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you. I  
11 just have one quick question. Why aren't we doing  
12 the Cathedral St. John the Divine as part of the  
13 district; it seems like it's right on the border and  
14 perhaps be relatively easy to sort of include it from  
15 that perspective; is there some particular reasoning  
16 for that?

17 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: There are a number of  
18 reasons and I think one is just the idea of this as  
19 an individual landmark of an extreme level of  
20 significance, but also, the district really is about  
21 the residential development of the district, which is  
22 a bit of a different character, and then also, as you  
23 know, when we designate districts we have to be  
24 careful about where buildings are contributing and  
25 where buildings are considered to be intrusions

2 because of alteration or sort of a difference in  
3 character, and so it was difficult in this area to  
4 extend the boundaries all the way to the Cathedral.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Got it.

6 Lauren; did you wanna add something?

7 LAUREN GEORGE: I think she covered it  
8 quite nicely.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay. Thank  
10 you very much. I do want to thank Council Member  
11 Levine; I do think that one of the things that we've  
12 been frustrated about for many years prior to this  
13 administration is that areas that were outside of the  
14 core of Manhattan were ignored when it comes to  
15 landmarking and I think it's a very significant  
16 achievement that under this administration or this  
17 Council Member to be able to successfully finally  
18 landmark this really incredible Cathedral as well as  
19 create a brand new landmark district, and so I wanna  
20 thank the Landmarks Preservation Commission for  
21 working with Council Member Levine; I know this has  
22 been a priority of his since he arrived and I would  
23 say even since before he arrived to the City Council  
24 and he's been advocating for it and to his credit,  
25 many have tried but he was the first one who actually

2 got it done, so thank you Council Member and  
3 congratulations and this is really a wonderful  
4 permanent addition and it's one of those great things  
5 that regardless of how long our terms are here in the  
6 City Council, you know that this is a permanent  
7 change and a preservation for the community that will  
8 be felt your kids and your grandkids, so thank you  
9 very much and congratulations for that.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Are there  
11 any more questions from Council Members? Seeing  
12 none, yeah. Thank you.

13 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Thank you.

14 [background comments]

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Victoria Mason-Ailey,  
16 [background comment] Harry Schwartz, Robert Stern,  
17 and Gregory Dietrich. Yeah. Can you just go to the  
18 table? [background comments] [pause] Please  
19 identify yourself and you can start, yeah.

20 VICTORIA MASON-AILEY: Good morning. My  
21 name is Victoria Mason-Ailey and I thank you for the  
22 opportunity to speak before you on behalf of Columbia  
23 University. Given time constraints, I'd like to  
24 summarize key elements in testimony we have provided  
25 in previous stages of this process.



2 From the beginning, Columbia University  
3 has been agnostic on the designation; while we have  
4 admiration for the work of the Landmarks Preservation  
5 Commission, we have expressed specific concerns  
6 regarding the properties located at 604-616 West  
7 114th Street at the eastern edge of the proposed  
8 district. We have long considered the Columbia-owned  
9 properties located at 604-616 West 114th Street,  
10 combined with the parking lot located between 605-615  
11 West 113th Street to be a site appropriate for  
12 university housing or other uses that would be  
13 created in compatibility with the neighborhood. We  
14 would not be able to proceed with this development if  
15 the 114th Street properties are included in the  
16 proposed district.

17 In addition, the subject buildings are  
18 not architecturally significant; we concur with  
19 Dr. Andrew Dolkart, who, in his 1998 book *Morningside*  
20 *Heights: A History of Its Architecture and*  
21 *Development*, described these buildings as  
22 "exceptionally narrow and particularly banal." As  
23 you know, Dr. Dolkart is an internationally  
24 recognized authority on historic preservation in New  
25 York City.

2 We believe that the properties' location  
3 along the edge of the proposed district, along with  
4 the noncontributing vacant lot at 618 West 114th  
5 Street diminishes their capacity to contribute to the  
6 district's overall cohesiveness and integrity. Based  
7 on our land use concerns and the lack of distinction  
8 of these structures and the fact that they are  
9 situated at the edge of the district, we have  
10 requested that the eastern boundary on the south side  
11 of West 114th Street be moved to the western edge of  
12 618 West 114th Street. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, anybody else can  
14 start [sic].

15 GREGORY DIETRICH: Good morning. My name  
16 is Gregory Dietrich and I reside at 615 West 113th  
17 Street, within the proposed district. I am also the  
18 Principal of Gregory Dietrich Preservation Consulting  
19 and an advisor to the Morningside Heights Historic  
20 District Committee.

21 I am pleased to support this district's  
22 designation and my building's inclusion in it. I  
23 believe that this district captures the prevailing  
24 architectural style and building typology of the  
25 early 20th century apartment house as manifested in

2 mostly upper middle class apartment houses along the  
3 avenues and more solidly middle class apartment  
4 buildings and flats buildings along the cross  
5 streets. It also captures the smaller scale  
6 residential buildings along the cross streets that  
7 are so indelibly linked to the development of the  
8 Upper West Side, from the row of elegant townhouses  
9 at 621-627 West 113th Street, which were designed by  
10 C.P.H. Gilbert in a style evocative of Charles  
11 Bulfinch's work in Beacon Hill to the more modest and  
12 quirky late 19th century row houses at 604-616 West  
13 114th Street, designed by Frank A. Lang in the Neo-  
14 Renaissance style.

15           But beyond these residential buildings,  
16 this district captures the authentic fabric of the  
17 New York City neighborhood as emboldened by its  
18 religious buildings, the former West Side Unitarian  
19 Church, now Congregation Ramath Orah, designed in the  
20 Neo-Federal style and Broadway Presbyterian Church  
21 and its associated commercial building, designed in a  
22 Collegiate Gothic style. These institutions not only  
23 tell the story of the neighborhood's ecclesiastical  
24 development during the first decades of the 20th  
25 century, but also of the people who lived and

2 worshiped there. It goes without saying that these  
3 buildings' inclusion are as essential to the  
4 understanding of the historical development of  
5 Morningside Heights as the dozens and dozens of  
6 religious buildings found in so many of our other  
7 residential districts across the city.

8 I thank City Council for supporting the  
9 Landmarks Preservation Commission in this important  
10 first step in recognizing Morningside Heights'  
11 historical and architectural legacy and I look  
12 forward to future designations.

13 I also have testimony regarding St. John  
14 the Divine that I would like to read. Alright?  
15 [background comment] Thank you.

16 I am still Gregory Dietrich and I am  
17 still a resident of Morningside Heights and Principal  
18 of Gregory Dietrich Preservation Consulting, and an  
19 advisor to the Morningside Heights Historic District  
20 Committee.

21 I am testifying in support of the  
22 proposed designation of this landmark site. As a  
23 twenty-plus-year resident of the Heights, today's  
24 hearing is bittersweet to say the least. So first,  
25

2 let me touch on the bitter before I touch on the  
3 sweet.

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

17 Today, the experience of the Cathedral  
18 has been severely marred by a 20-story glass tower in  
19 the southeast parcel of the former Close, which looms  
20 higher than the Cathedral itself when viewed from the  
21 south; and more recently, by two 15-story Brutalist  
22 towers in the north parcel of the former Close, whose  
23 combined mass obscures the majority of the  
24 Cathedral's French-Gothic-inspired north façade when  
25 viewed from multiple angles. These out-of-scale

2 developments on the historic Close are a testament to  
3 the destruction that can be wrought in absence of  
4 local landmark protection.

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

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

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you very much.  
23 Next speaker.

24 ROBERT STERN: Hello, my name is Robert  
25 Stern. I am testifying today on behalf of the

2 Morningside Heights Community Coalition (MHCC), we're  
3 neighborhood residents, co-op owners and tenants who  
4 have come together in recent months to ensure that  
5 rapidly-increasing luxury housing development does  
6 not destroy the architectural and social fabric of  
7 our community. Hundreds of community members have  
8 united out of a common love for our neighborhood and  
9 a shared concern for its future. We have won the  
10 support of our elected officials and have drawn the  
11 attention of City agencies.

12 The MHCC includes residents of all  
13 Morningside Heights, from 110th to 125th Street, from  
14 Morningside Park to Riverside Park and we join  
15 together today in enthusiastically supporting the  
16 proposed designation of a historic district in the  
17 southern part of our neighborhood.

18 We support the designation because it  
19 recognizes the unique character of Morningside  
20 Heights -- its cohesive grand scale along the avenues  
21 and drives, and its intimate scale along the cross  
22 streets giving it visual interest -- its European  
23 architectural character evoked by its signature  
24 Beaux-Arts-style buildings. This rare urban  
25 environment is invaluable not only to long-time

2 residents, but also to visitors, including tourists  
3 from all over the world and students and scholars  
4 drawn to its various academic institutions.

5 Approving the proposed historic district designation  
6 is an important step in preserving our neighborhood  
7 as an international treasure.

8 We congratulate the Morningside Heights  
9 Historic District Committee on 20 years of tireless  
10 advocacy on behalf of our neighborhood. MHCC looks  
11 forward to more phases to come in recognizing this  
12 distinctive and essential part of New York City's  
13 history, the character of which is now threatened by  
14 uncontrolled real estate development. Members of  
15 MHCC living north of 116h Street look forward to the  
16 time when the distinctive architecture of the  
17 northern section of Morningside Heights receives  
18 official recognition from the Landmarks Preservation  
19 Commission, but in the meantime, all members of MHCC  
20 join in enthusiastically supporting the proposed  
21 designation, and we thank the Land Use Committee for  
22 considering this proposal and thank you for the  
23 opportunity to testify.



2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Can we stop  
3 this for one minute? We want to recognize Council  
4 Member Rose's presence and she wants to make a vote.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: On land use items  
6 602, 603 and the Preconsidered LU related to the  
7 interiors of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Council  
8 Member Rose, how do you vote?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Aye.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: By a vote of 7 in the  
11 affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0 abstentions, the  
12 items are recommended for approval by the Full Land  
13 Use Committee.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Sir, you may begin.  
15 Identify yourself and begin... [crosstalk]

16 HARRY SCHWARTZ: Yes. I'm Harry  
17 Schwartz, a member of the Morningside Heights  
18 Historic District Committee. We've been working, as  
19 you've heard numerous times, for 20 years to achieve  
20 this designation. Might note; one of our founders is  
21 now our Assemblyman Danny O'Donnell; strong supporter  
22 of this district.

23 Morningside Heights was essentially  
24 developed when the IRT line came up through the  
25 Heights between then and World War I. It's the

2 largest collection in the city of middle-income,  
3 broadly defined apartment buildings built in such a  
4 concentrated period; a very unique collection of  
5 buildings.

6 The proposed district would protect a  
7 large share of those buildings; notably, it will  
8 extend these protections along 11 blocks on Riverside  
9 Drive, one of the great boulevards in New York City;  
10 it will also include Claremont and Cathedral Parkway,  
11 stately and distinctive streets in themselves.

12 So what do we have in the district? What  
13 I would say is consistency and with variety. We have  
14 apartment buildings on the major streets -- Riverside  
15 Drive, Claremont, along Broadway -- and in-between  
16 lower buildings, many of them row houses, as we've  
17 seen in the illustrations. The architectural variety  
18 also gives consistency, the heights of the buildings  
19 are more or less the same, building materials of  
20 stone and brick are the same, the street line and all  
21 the buildings has been maintained, we have some large  
22 and rather distinctive canopies on some of the  
23 buildings, the building entrances are intact, and the  
24 cornices have been maintained. So we have a high  
25 degree of architectural unity and some variety, mix

2 of housing types -- apartment buildings on the  
3 corners, some mid-block, but row housing and smaller  
4 buildings between them; also, strong cultural  
5 associations. Many of the city's renowned designers  
6 of apartment buildings worked there -- Schwartz &  
7 Gross (no relation) and others worked there. And I  
8 should note, the pioneers of the country's movie  
9 industry almost all lived in this neighborhood once  
10 -- Carl Laemmle, Jesse Lasky, Cecil B. DeMille --  
11 they went west, of course, left the Heights, they  
12 found the industry, but this area has strong cultural  
13 associations with the people who live there.

14 We also have a distinctive church,  
15 Broadway Presbyterian, which forms a very important  
16 link in the district and definitely is part of it.

17 So we urge you to approve the district as  
18 it's been offered by the Landmarks Preservation  
19 Commission and that will help preserve an  
20 architectural, historic and cultural treasure of the  
21 City. Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Next  
23 speaker.

24 LAURA FRIEDMAN: My name is Laura  
25 Friedman and I have been an owner and resident of

2 Morningside Heights for 40 years. For half that  
3 time, 20 years, our committee has been working toward  
4 achieving an historic district in our beautiful  
5 neighborhood.

6 As we stated in our request for  
7 evaluation before the Landmarks Preservation  
8 Commission, Morningside Heights' special character is  
9 derived from its cohesiveness as a neighborhood  
10 bearing multiple imprints of Beaux-Arts city  
11 planning, its diversity of historic buildings  
12 encompassing world-class and neighborhood  
13 institutions and middle class apartment houses, and  
14 it's elevated topography. Added to that is the cadre  
15 of esteemed architects working in the neighborhood  
16 from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

17 People from all over the world come every  
18 day to visit Morningside Heights, one of the jewels  
19 in the crown of our proud city. It is a neighborhood  
20 that represents, through its architectural splendor,  
21 beautiful parks and many institutions, a unique  
22 community in the midst of a thriving city. The  
23 amazing thing about Morningside Heights is how this  
24 neighborhood exists in the current moment on so many  
25

2 historic and architectural levels. It has exquisite  
3 beauty, which is both manmade and natural.

4 As President of the Morningside Heights  
5 Historic District Committee, I would like to take  
6 this opportunity to thank Council Member Mark Levine  
7 for his leadership and guidance, Commissioner  
8 Srinivasan, Executive Director Sarah Carroll, Lauren  
9 George and the staff at LPC whom we have been working  
10 with to complete the first phase -- I can't say that  
11 loudly enough -- the first phase of a historic  
12 district in our community.

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

16 Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Next we  
18 have Daniel Victor from Congregation...

19 DANIEL VICTOR: Ramath Orah.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Ramath Orah. Okay.  
21 Sure, you can begin [sic]... [crosstalk]

22 DANIEL VICTOR: I'm a member of the Board  
23 of Trustees of Congregation Ramath Orah, which is  
24 located at 550 West 110th Street; it forms the east  
25 southern border of the proposed district. Our

2 congregation was founded in 1941 by Jewish refugees  
3 from the country of Luxemburg who fled that country  
4 after the Nazi invasion in 1940 and we are  
5 approaching our 75th anniversary.

6 At the outset I'd just like to say that  
7 we do not, the Congregation does not oppose the  
8 proposed Morningside Heights Historic District, but  
9 we do object to the inclusion of the synagogue in the  
10 borders of the district.

11 The overall purpose of the district is to  
12 protect the architectural integrity of Beaux-Arts  
13 residential buildings built between 1900 and 1915.  
14 Our building is not only non-residential, but it was  
15 completed in 1922; it was built as a community  
16 religious building for the Unitarian Church, but in  
17 1941 it was converted to the synagogue to serve as  
18 the religious center for Luxemburg Jews and other  
19 Jewish refugees from Europe.

20 It's been suggested that buildings like  
21 ours should be included in the district because they  
22 tell the story of the ecclesiastical makeup of the  
23 neighborhood in the early 20th century, but that's  
24 really not the case with respect to the synagogue.  
25 The synagogue was 20 years a Unitarian religious

2 center, but for 75 years it has really been  
3 integrated in the neighborhood as a home for both  
4 Jews from Europe but also Jews from the neighborhood.  
5 Its story and its significance as a religious  
6 institution really begins in the latter half of the  
7 20th century and for that reason -- that's one reason  
8 why we believe it's inconsistent to seek to conform  
9 its appearance to early 20th century Beaux-Arts  
10 residential buildings.

11 Our congregation is a small one, we have  
12 only 100 core members, we employ a part-time rabbi,  
13 we have no full-time administrative staff, it is  
14 totally serviced by volunteers; in the past five  
15 years we've barely achieved the break-even budget.  
16 We are in the middle of a capital campaign to  
17 complete critical infrastructure repairs to the  
18 building, the roof, systems -- electrical, boilers --  
19 and we are \$250,000 short of our goal. In fact, the  
20 proceeds of further fundraising will be devoted to  
21 rehabilitating the Congregation's historic stained  
22 glass windows, a third of which we were forced to  
23 remove in March because they are falling into the  
24 courtyard in the rear of the building. The  
25 imposition of restrictions on our ability to complete

2 these critical repairs and the related increases and  
3 expenses and delays will make achievement of that  
4 goal even more difficult.

5 Most of our congregation lives in the  
6 proposed district; we're in favor of it, as I said,  
7 and we also understand the need to halt -- rapidly-  
8 increasing luxury development I think was the term  
9 that was used. But Ramath Orah is uniquely  
10 positioned in the sense that it is unable, as a  
11 matter of prior agreements, to undertake any  
12 development of the building beyond its current  
13 dimensions.

14 We were party to a 1996 agreement with  
15 Columbia University pursuant to which we covenanted  
16 in perpetuity not to develop the site higher than its  
17 current height, which is two stories tall; it is  
18 therefore economically infeasible to develop the site  
19 if the edifice that can replace it is limited to two  
20 stories. Accordingly, the Congregation is not and  
21 will never be in a position to orchestrate a new  
22 development of the property that would be at odds  
23 with the architectural character of the neighborhood,  
24 and therefore we submit that our inclusion in the  
25 border is unnecessary.



2 Finally, we believe that the inclusion  
3 will impair our ability to institute security  
4 protections that we are currently in the process of  
5 doing. We received a \$75,000 Homeland Security grant  
6 intended to harden the perimeter of the synagogue  
7 which includes hardening outside doors and  
8 installation of electronic security measures, such as  
9 alarms and cameras. If we're included in the  
10 district, these steps will require review and  
11 approval by the LPC; the \$75,000 funding is barely  
12 adequate to effect the minimum improvements we feel  
13 are required and if we're included, we believe it  
14 would further induce the amount of funding available  
15 for these very necessary productions.

16 I just want to point out that we are two  
17 of I think three institutional buildings included in  
18 the district; there are scores of institutional  
19 buildings of the major players in Morningside Heights  
20 -- Columbia, Barnard, JTS, Union Theological, The  
21 Interchurch Center, Riverside Church, the Church of  
22 Notre Dame -- many of these institutional buildings,  
23 although residential buildings of some of these  
24 places were included, the institutional buildings  
25 were not included and we don't understand why we,

2 along with another small religious institution, were  
3 included.

4 Our proposal is that by moving the 110th  
5 Street east of Broadway border one building probably  
6 120 feet east would create a carve-out of our  
7 institution without interfering with the contiguous  
8 nature of the proposed district along 110th Street  
9 and we respectfully request that you consider  
10 exempting us from this border. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Any  
12 questions from members for the other speakers? No?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I'll just make a  
14 brief statement on the panel as a whole, which is to  
15 acknowledge the incredible leadership of Laura and  
16 Harry and Robert and so many others who for two  
17 decades have mounted a grassroots campaign, drawing  
18 on the expertise of Gregory and others. This simply  
19 would not have happened if this grassroots group had  
20 not put so much brainpower into this project; you  
21 have an infectious love for the neighborhood, which I  
22 think has won people over and is why hundreds of  
23 people have joined the cause, so you guys probably  
24 don't thank enough, but I do want to acknowledge how  
25 much I admire the work you've put into this and how

2 much of a joy it's been to partner with you on this  
3 phase one of the Morningside Heights Historic  
4 Preservation project.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Now we have  
6 Clifton Daniel and Gregory Dietrich. [background  
7 comments] Oh, they already spoke? [background  
8 comment] Oh. Okay. So are there any more members  
9 of the public who wish to testify? One more? 'Kay,  
10 we have Clifton Daniel?

11 CLIFTON DANIEL: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. Please identify  
13 yourself and start.

14 CLIFTON DANIEL: Good morning; I'm  
15 Clifton Daniel... Good afternoon; I'm Clifton Daniel;  
16 I'm the Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine  
17 and I have come to say first, thank you for the  
18 consideration you're extended to the Cathedral and  
19 supporting its designation as a landmark property.

20 So much has been said already about it, I  
21 mean a great history of the Cathedral -- you stole my  
22 speech, so I'm going to be short.

23 The part, for me, that this Cathedral  
24 offers, it offers so many things, both to the  
25 neighborhood and to the City of New York. It is a

2 cultural center, almost daily, certainly weekly,  
3 there is a concert, there is an orchestra playing,  
4 there's a group singing; we are getting ready to host  
5 the New York Philharmonic in May for their concert; I  
6 mean it's a rich cultural resource center for the  
7 City and for the area.

8 A patron of the arts, certainly; a house  
9 of faith and worship, the very charter of the  
10 Cathedral of St. John, says that this is a house of  
11 prayer for all people and as a friend of mine says,  
12 "sometimes all means all," so all are welcome to come  
13 to St. John the Divine to pray and to worship, to  
14 take part in the life. It also contributes heavily  
15 to the economic vitality of the neighborhood, with  
16 over or right around a million visits every year, so  
17 the neighborhood is enriched not just with people and  
18 activity, but also economically.

19 Well thank you; that's really all I  
20 wanted to say; I just wanna say thank you for your  
21 consideration, for your support, for our Council  
22 Member support, and for the landmark designation.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. So are  
24 there any more members of the public who want to  
25

2 testify? Seeing none, this public hearing on this  
3 item is now closed.

4 The designation of the Morningside  
5 Heights Historic District and St. John the Divine  
6 Cathedral and Cathedral Close are hereby laid over  
7 for further consideration.

8 Thank you members of the public, my  
9 colleagues, counsel, and Land Use staff; this meeting  
10 is adjourned.

11 [gavel]

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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 June 6, 2017