

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE  
THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING  
AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS  
HISTORIC DISTRICT, BROOKLYN**

**September 9, 2009**

Good morning Council Members. My name is Jenny Fernández, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of Prospect Heights Historic District in Brooklyn.

On October 28, 2008 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Twenty-eight people spoke in favor of designation, including Council Member Letitia James, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, representatives of Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke, Historic Districts Council, Municipal Arts Society, Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance, Prospect Place Block Association, 119 Prospect Place Owners Corp., Community Board 8, Crown Heights North Association, Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council, Crow Hill Community Association, Prospect Heights Association, Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society of America, Noticing New York, New York Landmarks Conservancy, and Society for the Architecture of the City of New York, and numerous citizens and local residents. One person spoke in opposition to the proposed designation, two owners of commercial properties on Flatbush Avenue testified against including those properties in the district and two people did not state whether they supported or opposed the proposed designation. In addition, the Commission also received many letters and emails regarding this designation. The majority have been in favor of designation. On June 23, 2009, the Commission voted to designate Prospect Heights a New York City historic district.

The Prospect Heights Historic District includes approximately 850 buildings, predominately single-family row houses and apartment buildings, constructed, for the most part, between the middle of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The Prospect Heights neighborhood is located immediately north of Prospect Park and is bounded by Atlantic Avenue to the north, Eastern Parkway to the south, Flatbush Avenue to the west, and Washington Avenue to the east. The area was occupied by the Lenape Indians at the time of European contact. During the eighteenth century the land came into possession of a number of different owners, several of whom were slave owners. It was still predominately farm and wood lands until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The two most important factors in the growth of Prospect Heights were transportation improvements and the development of Prospect Park. These transportation improvements included new links between Prospect Heights and the ferries along Brooklyn's waterfront. Construction began on Prospect Park in 1866 and the park opened to the public in 1871, although it was not yet complete. The land in the southeast part of the district was taken for the park but was not included in the final design and after years of litigation was sold and developed starting in the 1890s.

The earliest houses were built in the Italianate style of architecture, popular from about 1840 to 1870. Row houses began to be designed in two variations of the Italianate style, the Anglo-Italianate, popular from about 1865 to 1870 and the Italianate style with Second Empire elements, popular from 1870 to 1885. Prospect Heights has houses dating from the second half of the 1870s and the 1880s designed in the neo-Grec style by prominent Brooklyn architects such as the Parfitt Brothers, John H. Doherty, Nelson Whipple, Jeremiah J. Gilligan, Eastman & Daus and Marshall J. Morrill.

The earliest multiple dwellings in the district appear on Vanderbilt Avenue, in the early 1870s. Vanderbilt Avenue and Flatbush Avenue, two of the major thoroughfares in Brooklyn, are characterized by multi-family residential buildings with ground floor commercial spaces in Prospect Heights. The Prospect Heights Historic District has some important institutional buildings, including the former Public School 9 Annex, the Duryea Presbyterian Church and the former Mount Prospect Laboratory.

The Prospect Heights Historic District remains among Brooklyn's most architecturally distinguished areas, retaining some of the borough's most beautiful and well-preserved residential streets, and featuring a broad array of outstanding residential architecture in popular styles of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The area continues to retain its cohesion due to its tree-lined streets, scale, predominant residential character and its architectural integrity.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE  
THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING  
AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF MOUNT OLIVE FIRE  
BAPTIZED HOLINESS CHURCH, MANHATTAN**

**September 9, 2009**

Good morning Council Members. My name is Jenny Fernández, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of Mount Olive Fire Baptized Holiness Church in Manhattan.

On March 24, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Four witnesses spoke in favor of the proposed designation, including a representative of the church, as well as representatives of the Municipal Arts Society, the Historic Districts Council, and the Society for the Architecture of the City. There were no speakers in opposition to the proposed designation. On June 23, 2009, the Commission voted to designate the building a New York City landmark.

The Mount Olive Fire Baptized Holiness Church, with its distinctive façade combining elements of the Gothic Revival and Romanesque Revival styles, was constructed in 1897 for the Second Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America was founded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by Irish and Scottish worshippers who were fleeing persecution at home for their refusal to take oaths of loyalty to the British government. As church membership in New York City grew, so did the need for a second geographical division that would serve congregants living in Manhattan north of Chambers Street. On June 11, 1830, the Second Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America was organized, occupying a structure at 166 Waverly Place. In 1897, the Second Reformed Presbyterian Church constructed this house of worship at 304-308 West 122<sup>nd</sup> Street. The selection of the Harlem site for the building is reflective of the increasing popularity of the neighborhood as a residential community, largely a result of the opening of elevated rail lines through northern Manhattan in the late 1870s and a proposed subway route in the late 1890s. In 1943, the Mount Olive Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas purchased the church and continues to worship there today, 45 years later.

The Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas was founded in 1898 in Mountville, South Carolina, by a Methodist preacher, William Edward Fuller, Sr., after he received the "Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire" while praying alone in a corn field near his home. The one-story, beige brick building was

designed in the Gothic- and Romanesque-Revival styles by architect James W. Cole. Distinguishing features of the building include its symmetrical facade featuring pointed-arched window openings, terra-cotta ornament, stained-glass windows, crenellated brick corbelling at a prominently gabled roofline, and decorative pinnacles.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE  
THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING  
AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF JOHN PEIRCE RESIDENCE,  
MANHATTAN**

**September 9, 2009**

Good morning Council Members. My name is Jenny Fernández, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the former John Peirce Residence at 11 East 51<sup>st</sup> Street in Manhattan.

On January 13, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Five people spoke in favor of designation, including a representative of Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, a representative of the property owner, and representatives of the Municipal Arts Society of New York, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, and the Historic Districts Council. No one spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission has also received several letters and other statements in support of designation. On June 23, 2009, the Commission voted to designate the building a New York City landmark.

The residence at 11 East 51<sup>st</sup> Street was erected in 1904-06 for stone and building contractor John Peirce and was designed by noted architect John H. Duncan. At the time of the building's construction, Fifth Avenue just south of Central Park was the most prestigious residential area in the city and was known as Vanderbilt Row because of that family's involvement in maintaining the elite character of the neighborhood. Peirce was born in Frankfort, Maine where his father operated a granite quarry. Peirce succeeded to the family business in 1873 and soon came to control much of the granite industry in Maine. In the early 1880s he moved to New York City to oversee the operations of his New York and Maine Granite Paving Block Company and to expand the market for his firm's products. Peirce soon became one of the largest stone contractors in the country, earning the title of "Granite King." By the 1890s Peirce had expanded the scope of his business to include general building contracting, and he later became involved in a number of large-scale civic infrastructure projects including the construction of New York City's first subway system. Many of the city's most iconic structures were erected with the assistance of Peirce's firm.

At turn of the twentieth century, Peirce commissioned architect John H. Duncan to design a residence. The most striking feature of the house is the full rustication of the lower three floors. The upper floors are faced with smooth ashlar stone, with projecting cornices above the third and fifth stories. While generally austere

in demeanor, a number of sculptural elements—including the projecting balcony at the second floor and the ornamental stone keystones and wreaths—are in a more lavish Beaux-Arts style.

When completed, the Peirce Residence stood in the middle of a distinguished row of houses overlooking St. Patrick's Cathedral. Within a few years, however, the fortunes of both John Peirce and the neighborhood changed dramatically. Peirce's company went into receivership in 1909 and failed altogether in 1915. He lost his residence to foreclosure in 1914, at a time when many wealthy families were abandoning the neighborhood to commercial and apartment house development. The building at 11 East 51st Street was subsequently occupied by the Gardner School for Girls and later by a series of businesses. In spite of the changes of use and in the character of the surrounding neighborhood, the Peirce Residence remains nearly perfectly intact and is a significant reminder of the area's history as a prestigious residential district.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE  
THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING  
AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF 94 GREENWICH STREET  
HOUSE, MANHATTAN**

**September 9, 2009**

Good morning Council Members. My name is Jenny Fernández, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the 94 Greenwich Street House in Manhattan.

On January 30, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Twelve people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Municipal Art Society of New York, New York Landmarks Conservancy, and Historic Districts Council. In addition, the Commission received a number of communications in support of designation, including a letter from Augustine Hicks Lawrence III, a sixth-generation descendant of the original owner. One of the property's owners, who oppose designation, appeared at the June 23, 2009, public meeting and requested a postponement of the vote. The building had been previously heard by the Commission on October 19, 1965, and June 23, 1970. On June 23, 2009, the Commission voted to designate the building a New York City landmark.

The Federal style row house at No. 94 Greenwich Street in Lower Manhattan was constructed c.1799-1800 as an investment property, right after this block was created through landfill and Greenwich and Rector Streets had been laid out. At the time, this was the most fashionable neighborhood for New York's social elite and wealthy merchant class. The owner of No. 94 was Augustine Hicks Lawrence, a prominent stock and insurance broker, banker, and commission merchant, who served as director of a number of banks and companies, as well as an assistant alderman and alderman in 1809-16. What makes this house highly significant is that it is among only five surviving houses of Manhattan's most elite neighborhood of the post-Revolutionary War era, the others including the Watson House (1793, 1806), 7 State Street, and Dickey House (1809-10), 67 Greenwich Street, both designated New York City Landmarks. No. 94 Greenwich Street is among the relatively rare extant Manhattan houses of the Federal period and style, is one of the oldest houses in Manhattan. As constructed, the house was three-and-a-half stories with a high peaked gambrel roof (probably with dormers) – the outline of the original roofline is still visible on the Rector Street facade. It features Flemish bond brickwork and splayed lintels on the second and third stories, those on the Rector Street facade are marble with double keystones, while the Greenwich Street facade has splayed brick lintels. By 1810, No. 94 had become a boardinghouse for merchants and professional men

(many of them prominent), housed a porterhouse by 1837, and was listed as a hotel in 1841. The building was raised one full story prior to 1858, and has a two-story rear addition dating from c. 1853/1873. The building remained in the possession of Lawrence family descendants until 1921, and has housed a variety of commercial tenants.

Despite alterations, the 94 Greenwich Street House is recognizable as a grand early Federal style rowhouse, made particularly notable by its height, corner location with two primary facades, the visible outline of the original gambrel roofline on the Rector Street facade, and its splayed marble lintels with double keystones (a feature typical of the earliest surviving Federal style houses in Manhattan).

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.



Testimony of Gib Veconi,  
Chair, Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council  
New York City Council Landmarks Subcommittee Hearing, 9/9/2009

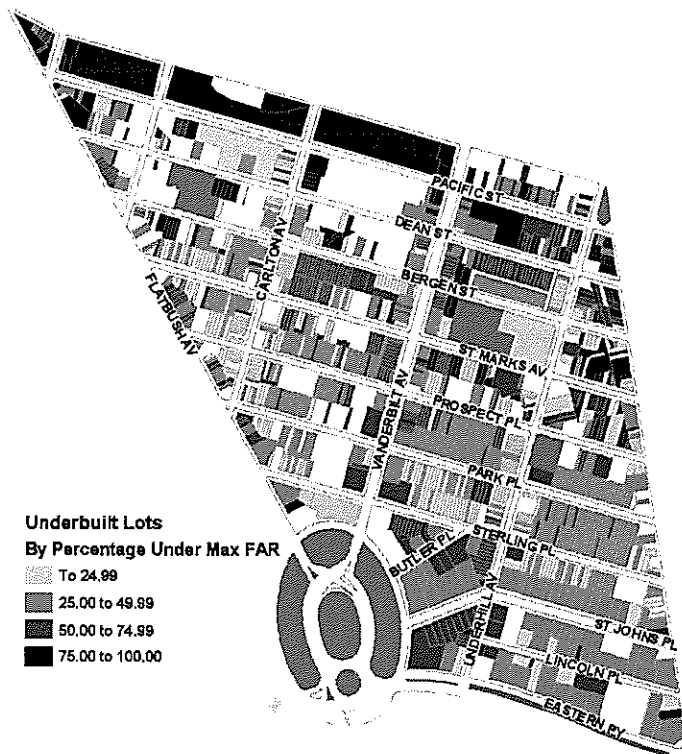
My name is Gib Veconi, and I am Chair of the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council. PHNDC's members are civic and merchant associations in the Prospect Heights community whom PHNDC represents on issues relating to housing, economic development, physical environment, safety and security, and social services.

On behalf of our members, I'd like to thank the Subcommittee for considering the designation of a historic district in the Prospect Heights neighborhood, and for the opportunity for our organization to speak today in support of the creation of such a district.

Prospect Heights has a large set of contiguous blocks of mid- to late-19th century residential structures. The existence of such a large number of buildings from the same period of architectural styles ranging from Neo-Grec to Italianate to Romanesque Revival makes Prospect Heights a unique neighborhood even in a borough of historic neighborhoods, and gives it a special sense of place. Further, the transition from blocks of lower three-storey brick houses on Bergen Street on the north side of the district to four and five-story brownstone and limestone houses on Prospect, Park and Sterling Places on the southern end of the district is a lasting reminder of the socioeconomic diversity that has thrived in our neighborhood from its development in the late nineteenth century until today. Finally, Vanderbilt Avenue represents one of the very few commercial thoroughfares of historic Brooklyn whose buildings have seen relatively little change.

The character and scale of Prospect Heights is threatened today by development seeking to maximize the amount of floor area available to be built under the district's zoning. Although the current R6B zoning of most Prospect Heights' side streets is contextual for the neighborhood, the deep lots on those streets mean that many lots in the neighborhood are more than 25% underbuilt relative to allowable density, and some are up to 75% underbuilt. On Vanderbilt Avenue, the current R7A zoning would enable the existing three- and four-storey buildings to be extended up to seven storeys.

This situation has led to historic buildings being demolished in favor of higher-density new construction. Such buildings include the former burlap factory at 528 Bergen Street and a detached Victorian house at 330 Park Place, both demolished and replaced with larger apartment buildings. Over the last few years, there have also been many uncharacteristic rooftop and rear yard extensions, including 299 Park Place, 417 Park Place, 162 St. Marks Avenue, 602 Bergen Street and 554 Vanderbilt Avenue. Pictures of all of these buildings accompany my written testimony.



PHNDC is further concerned that the scale and density of the Atlantic Yards project will increase the incidence of out-of-context development in Prospect Heights. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has called the historic brownstone neighborhoods surrounding the Atlantic Yards site a national treasure, and preservation of their character a national concern.

Unfortunately, unlike Park Slope, Boerum Hill, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and now Crown Heights, Prospect Heights does not currently enjoy the protection of historic designation. That's why PHNDC has led a community initiative seeking designation of a Prospect Heights historic district. Over 20 volunteers worked to collect photographs and data on more than one thousand buildings in Prospect Heights in preparation of a request for evaluation that was submitted to LPC in the spring of 2007. Since that time, PHNDC has held numerous block meetings, promoted two neighborhood-wide forums, and reached thousands of community residents by mail. We have presented LPC with more than four hundred letters of support, and over four hundred response cards from neighbors who are hoping the Council will act before another building is destroyed or altered forever. The initiative to create a Prospect Heights historic district has also received the support of Community

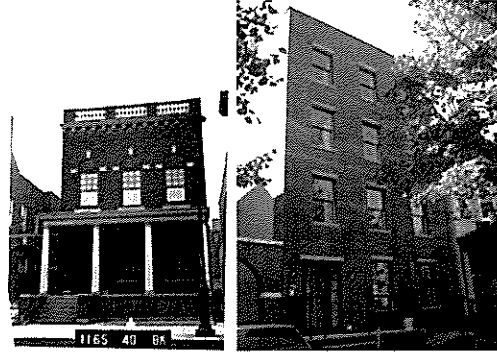
Board 8, Councilmember Letitia James, Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries, Assemblywoman Joan Millman, State Senator Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, and Congresswoman Yvette Clarke.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak in support of historic designation for Prospect Heights. Please act swiftly to preserve our historic neighborhood.

**Recent losses of historic buildings**

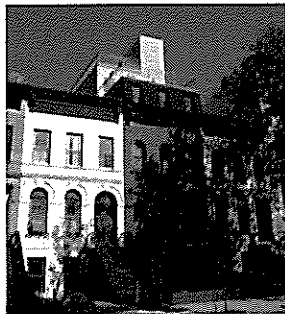


528 Bergen Street

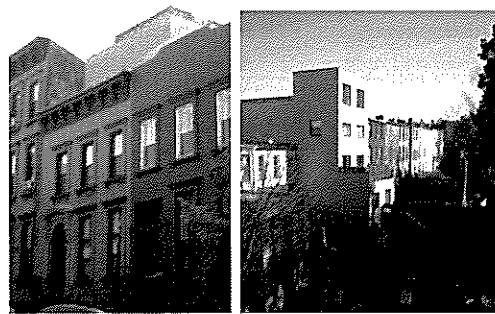


330 Park Place

**Recent uncharacteristic alterations**



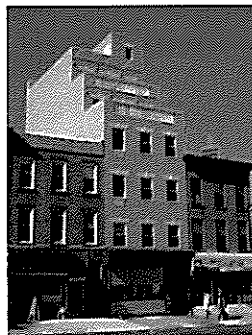
417 Park Place



162 St. Marks Avenue



602 Bergen Street



554 Vanderbilt Ave.



299 Park Place



Testimony of the Municipal Art Society  
Before the City Council's Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses  
By Melissa Baldock, Kress/RFR Fellow for Historic Preservation and Public Policy  
Designation of the Prospect Heights Historic District  
September 9, 2009

I am Melissa Baldock, Kress Fellow for Historic Preservation and Public Policy, speaking in support of the Prospect Heights Historic District on behalf of the Municipal Art Society. The Municipal Art Society is a private, non-profit membership organization that fights for intelligent urban planning, design, and preservation through education, dialogue and advocacy.

MAS enthusiastically supports the designation of the Prospect Heights Historic District, and we would like to thank Council Member Letitia James for her support and leadership, which have helped us get to this point today. Prospect Heights is of great importance to MAS. In the wake of the proposed Atlantic Yards development, the future of Prospect Heights' historic resources came into question. In response, MAS worked closely with the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council to conduct a survey of the neighborhood. The neighborhood's involvement and dedication were remarkable. Over twenty members of the Prospect Heights Community were involved in the surveying and the preparation of a comprehensive proposal submitted to the LPC. In part due to that enthusiastic engagement, today there is widespread support in the community for this designation.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate Prospect Heights in June because of its rich historic architecture. The neighborhood includes some of Brooklyn's finest historic residential architecture. It includes beautiful blocks of rowhouses articulated in the Neo-Grec, Romanesque Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Second-Empire styles. These rowhouses are interspersed with churches and small commercial and apartment buildings, adding to the richness of the neighborhood's architecture. Located just north Prospect Park, the neighborhood has seen few changes since it was first developed in the mid- to late-nineteenth, and is one of brownstone Brooklyn's most intact neighborhoods. Containing over 850 buildings, Prospect Heights is the largest district designated by the LPC in decades. It is important to note that the agency's ability to undertake larger districts like Prospect Heights in recent years has been due, in large part, to the increased funding it received from the Council.

When there are large-scale development plans and rezonings that affect New York City's historic resources, it is critical that the LPC step in to ensure that these resources are protected. MAS applauds the LPC for doing just that in this instance, and urges the City Council to join Council Member James in supporting this 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: 9.9.09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenny Fernandez

Address: 1 Centre Street

I represent: NYC Landmarks Presentation Commission

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Prospect Hts Hist. District Date: 09-09-09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bob Biegen

Address: 264 Prospect Place

I represent: Prospect Heights Assoc.

Address: 264 Prospect Place

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

Prospect Hts Historic District  
I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/9/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Peter Gardenstein

Address: 277 Park Pl Brooklyn

I represent: Parkway Underhill Ave Block Assoc.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 2010502 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: 9/9/09

Name: Melissa Ballock (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 457 Madison Ave

I represent: Municipal Art Society

Address: 457 Madison Ave, NY NY

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 2010502 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: 9.9.09

Name: Gib Varoni (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 284 Park Pl, Brooklyn

I represent: Prospect Heights Neighborhood Dev. Cncl.

Address: same

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