

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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June 19, 2018  
Start: 1:44 p.m.  
Recess: 2:46 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.  
16<sup>th</sup> Fl.

B E F O R E: ADRIENNE E. ADAMS  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Inez D. Barron  
Peter A. Koo  
I. Daneek Miller  
Mark Treyger

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

Lisa Kersavage, Director of Special Projects and  
Strategic Planning, Landmarks Preservation  
Commission

Rita Sklar, Owner of the Emmet Building located at  
95 Madison Avenue Block 858 Lot 58

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND  
MARITIME USES

3

2 [sound check] [pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Good afternoon and  
4 welcome to this meeting of the Subcommittee on  
5 Landmarks, public Siting and Maritime Uses. I am  
6 Council Member Adrienne Adams, the chair of this  
7 subcommittee. We are joined today by Council Members  
8 Koo, Barron and Menchaca. Today, we will be holding  
9 public hearings. [pause] Today, we will be holding  
10 public hearings and voting on six landmark  
11 designations by the Landmarks Preservation  
12 Commission. [background comments, pause] Okay,  
13 hearing seven and voting on six. LU 115 is a  
14 designation of the Emmet Building located at 95  
15 Madison Avenue in Manhattan as a historic landmark.  
16 A 16-story limestone and terracotta office building  
17 constructed between 1911 and 1912, it is located in  
18 Council Member Rivera's district supported by Council  
19 Member Rivera. LU 116 is the designation by the  
20 Landmarks Preservation Commission of the Hotel  
21 Seville now the James NoMad Hotel located at 22 East  
22 29<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan as a historic landmark. It  
23 is located in Council Member Powers' district  
24 supported by Council Member Powers. LU 117 and 118  
25 and 119 are three landmarked designations in Council

1  
2 Member Ayala's district supported by Council Member  
3 Ayala. LU 117 is the designation as a historic  
4 landmark of Public School 109 now El Barrio's  
5 Artspace PS 109 located at 215 East 99<sup>th</sup> Street in  
6 Manhattan. The building was constructed in 1899 as a  
7 school. Since 2015, the building has been used as  
8 affordable housing and studio space for local  
9 artists. LU 118 is the designation of the Benjamin  
10 Franklin High School now the Manhattan Center for  
11 Science and Mathematics a two-block long brick and  
12 limestone Georgian Revival building located at 260-  
13 300 Pleasant Avenue in Manhattan. LU 119 is the  
14 designation of the Richard Webber Harlem Packing  
15 House located at 207-215 East 119<sup>th</sup> Street in  
16 Manhattan. Constructed in 1895, the building was  
17 formerly a meat market that was part of a larger  
18 slaughter house meat packing and retail complex. LU  
19 120 is the designation by the Landmarks Preservation  
20 Commission of a Dr. Maurice T. Lewis House as a  
21 historic landmark. The building is located at 404  
22 55<sup>th</sup> Street in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn  
23 and Council Member Menchaca's district supported by  
24 Council Member Menchaca. Constructed as a mansion in  
25 1907, the Dr. Maurice T. Lewis House was later

2 converted into an apartment building. Lastly, LU 121  
3 is the designation by the Landmarks Preservation  
4 Commission of the Dimes Savings Bank of Williamsburg  
5 as a historic landmark. Completed in 1908, it is  
6 located at 209 Havemeyer Street on Williamsburg  
7 Bridge Plaza in Council Member Reynoso's district.  
8 Representatives of the Landmark Preservation  
9 Commission will testify on all of these items  
10 followed by testimony by the public. We will now  
11 have comments by Council Member Menchaca.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And I don't  
13 want to spend too much time, but I will say thank not  
14 just to our chair for her incredible work here, but  
15 for the LPC and their work to do the right thing in  
16 so many parts of our district. There's so many on  
17 the docket today. I will say, though that the—Dr.  
18 Maurice T. Lewis House was one that—that—that really  
19 kind of set a really great tone and communication,  
20 conversation and partnership with the community.  
21 When we heard about the demolition permit, we also  
22 realized that the work that we had been doing in  
23 Sunset Park, a warm relationship between the city and  
24 the community came together, and swiftly, quickly  
25 came—came to the rescue. So, I'm here just to say

2 thank you, and then also thank you to this committee  
3 for—for the continued and official nod yes to  
4 preserve this property. Thank you. [pause]

5 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Oh, Council Member,  
6 you're good? Okay. Alright.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [off mic] I  
8 think I'm good.

9 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: [laughs] Okay, we're  
10 waiting. I saw you were really, really into it. So,  
11 I didn't—I wanted to make sure we didn't miss  
12 anything. Okay, thank you very much, Council Member  
13 Menchaca. Okay, I will now open the public hearings  
14 on these items. LPC, you are here. Please—Counsel,  
15 please swear in the panel and LPC can introduce  
16 themselves.

17 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
18 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
19 truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony  
20 before this subcommittee and in response to all  
21 Council Member questions?

22 LISA KERSAVAGE: I do. Good afternoon,  
23 Chair Adams and Subcommittee Members. My name is  
24 Lisa Kersavage. I'm the Director of Special Projects  
25 and Strategic Planning at the Landmarks Preservation

1 Commission, and I'm here to present seven recent  
2 designations by the Landmarks Preservation  
3 Commission. I'll do them one at a time I understand  
4 and stop in between each one, if that's okay. Okay  
5 great, and I just want to give you a heads up that  
6 some brevity, it's a little bit shorter than what you  
7 have in the testimony. So, we're going to start in  
8 Madison Square North. LPC has been analyzing the  
9 area around Madison Square North Historic District to  
10 identify potential individual landmarks and the Hotel  
11 Seville and Emmet Building, they're both stand-up  
12 buildings in our evaluation. Facing each other  
13 across Madison Avenue at 29<sup>th</sup> Street just north of  
14 the Historic District. They are architecturally  
15 significant early 20<sup>th</sup> Century structures. I will  
16 start with the Hotel Seville, which is a distinctive  
17 Beaux-Art style hotel notable for its elegant  
18 architecture and its importance with the development  
19 of New York City hotels within during the 20<sup>th</sup>  
20 Century. The hotel exhibits, the classic composition  
21 and exuberant ordinate features that we popular for  
22 hotel and apartment buildings at the time of  
23 construction. On March 6, 2018, the Commission voted  
24 to designate Hotel Seville now the James NoMad Hotel  
25

1 as an individual landmark following a public hearing  
2 held on February 20, 2018. At the public hearing and  
3 in written testimony, the Commission received support  
4 from ten organizations and individuals including a  
5 representative of the property owner, Council Member  
6 Kallos, State Senator Krueger, Assembly Member  
7 Gottfried and representatives from Community 5, the  
8 Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks  
9 Conservancy, the Society for Architecture of the  
10 City, 29<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood Association, and the  
11 Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society. The  
12 Commission did not receive any testimony opposing  
13 designation. The hotel is located at the southwest  
14 corner of Madison Avenue and East 29<sup>th</sup> Street north  
15 of Madison Square Park. The landmark with and L  
16 shaped footprint includes the hotel's corner section  
17 that opened in 1904, and the through-block annex  
18 completed a few years later in 1907. Like similar  
19 hotels built north of Madison Square the Hotel  
20 Seville reflects the neighborhood's evolution from  
21 affluent residential row house blocks into a bustling  
22 commercial and business district. The hotel catered  
23 to both permanent and-permanent residents and  
24 visitors. Harry Allen Jacobs designed the 12-story  
25



1 corner section of the hotel that was completed in  
2 1904. During his career he designed many New York  
3 City buildings including several that are now  
4 landmarks. Charles T. Mott another New York City  
5 architect and brother-in-law of the owner designed  
6 the through-block annex that was completed a few  
7 years later in 1907. As seen in the middle  
8 photograph the annex is only one story shorter, but  
9 continues the earlier Beaux-Art design. As you can  
10 see in the photo on the left, the Hotel Seville's  
11 distinctive stripe lined stone and red brick provides  
12 a backdrop from French inspired sculptural details.  
13 The handsome building today known as the James NoMad  
14 Hotel remains striking example of the Beaux-Art style  
15 with finely crafted details that enliven the façades  
16 and contribute significantly to the streetscape of  
17 the Madison Square North neighborhood. Given the  
18 significance of the Hotel Seville, we recommend that  
19 the City Council uphold this designation. [background  
20 comments, pause]

22 95 Madison Avenue also know as the Emmet  
23 Building is a 16-story office building designed by  
24 the firm of Barney and Colt for Dr. Thomas Addis  
25 Emmet in 1912. With its Neo-Renaissance decoration,

1 and neo-Gothic critical elements that embody the  
2 earliest 20<sup>th</sup> Century skyscraper style in New York  
3 City, the Emmet Building is an outstanding of  
4 commercial architecture. On March 6, 2018, the  
5 Commission voted to designate 95 Madison Avenue, the  
6 Emmet Building as an individual landmark following a  
7 public hearing held on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018. At the  
8 public hearing and in written testimony the  
9 Commission received support from ten organizations  
10 and individuals including the property owner, State  
11 Senator Krueger, Assembly Member Gottfried, Council  
12 Member Kallos and representatives of Community Board  
13 5, the Historic Districts Council, the New York  
14 Landmarks Conservancy, the Society for the  
15 Architecture of the City, the 29<sup>th</sup> Street  
16 Neighborhood Association, and the Victorian Society  
17 of the American Metropolitan New York Chapter. The  
18 Commission did not receive any testimony opposing  
19 designation. 95 Madison Avenue is locate between  
20 East 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Street. The building was built for  
21 Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, widely recognized as an  
22 important gynecological surgeon in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.  
23 In the early 1900s as new businesses were entering  
24 the area north of Madison Square, Dr. Emmet and his  
25

1 son formed a real estate company and replaced four  
2 row houses with this building. Primarily a  
3 commercial structure leased to tenants for wholesale  
4 showrooms, it also contained Dr. Emmet's penthouse  
5 apartment on the top floor. For Dr. Emmet, the  
6 architects designed a 16-story building that  
7 consisted of 15 floors of open commercial space that  
8 could be adapted to the tenant's needs for offices  
9 and showrooms. The steel frame building is clad in  
10 limestone on the first three floors and terracotta on  
11 the upper floors. The Emmet Building's extravagant  
12 decorations and overarching verticality were meant to  
13 distinguish it within the city's newest business  
14 district. Owned and operated by another family since  
15 the 1940s, the Emmet Building is remarkably intact  
16 and extremely well maintained example of early 20<sup>th</sup>  
17 Century Commercial architecture in New York and a  
18 prominent reminder of the development of the area  
19 north of Madison Square Park. Given the significance  
20 of the Emmet Building, we recommend that the City  
21 Council uphold this designation.  
22

23 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, thank you.  
24 We're going to pause right here, and we are going to  
25 hear remarks from Council Member Rivera.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you, Chair  
3 Adams and all the committee members for the  
4 opportunity to testify today. So, I am the  
5 Councilwoman for District 2, a district that includes  
6 95 Madison Avenue know as the Emmet Building and I  
7 want to first thank the New York City Landmarks  
8 Preservation Commission for designating this building  
9 and individual landmark. I have visited the site and  
10 find the structure striking and unique. As noted by  
11 the LPC, this structure dates to 1912, and represents  
12 the rich and complex history of New York. Initially  
13 envisioned by Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, as was  
14 mentioned, the 16-floor building has vertical tiers  
15 of terracotta that are adorned by medieval ornaments  
16 and took inspiration from a combined early century  
17 renaissance and neo-Gothic style, and thank you so  
18 much for your presentation, you very detailed  
19 presentation. It is based on an architectural mix of  
20 traditional European styles much like our city itself  
21 while resulting in one spectacular single product.  
22 Typically, the top of skyscraper of that era was  
23 designated a custodial space, but that Dr. Emmet  
24 built and ornate residential penthouse at the top of  
25 the New York commercial building, which creates an

2 early example of live-workspace. As the rest of the  
3 area became the forefront for new commercial  
4 development, 95 Madison transformed to pure  
5 commercial use. Its change in use along with the  
6 neighborhoods reflected our city's evolution through  
7 the Industrial and now Innovation ages. It is for  
8 these reasons that I support LPC's designation of the  
9 Emmet Building as a landmark and I ask this committee  
10 to support it as well. We do look forward to working  
11 with all stakeholders and agencies involved to  
12 address concerns and I look forward to working with  
13 you all to push this application through. Thank you  
14 so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much,  
16 Council Member Rivera. Thank you for being here  
17 today. At this time, we are going to excuse the panel  
18 temporarily, and we are going to ask any members of  
19 the public wishing to testify with regard to this  
20 item to please come, to please come. [background  
21 comments, pause] Rita. It is Rita Sklar.

22 RITA SKLAR: [off mic]

23 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Yes, ma'am.  
24 [coughs][background comments, pause] Ms. Sklar,  
25 thank you very much for being here today to testify

2 before this panel. I'm going to ask for five minutes  
3 on the clock. Okay, thank you very much. You may  
4 begin.

5 RITA SKLAR: Dear Chairperson Adams and  
6 the Committee. My property at 95 Madison Avenue 858-  
7 58 has recently been calendared and designated as a  
8 landmark property. My experience these few weeks has  
9 shocked me. I have discovered that the LPC is a  
10 sewer of influence peddling, shady practices,  
11 meetings conducted in secret behind owners' back and  
12 with no notification before or after such meetings  
13 with people who have special influence with New York  
14 politicians and agency-agencies. With plans reviewed  
15 by LPC that do not conform to any of the LPC rules  
16 and standards, and which were not summarily rejected  
17 by LPC staff members, and where submitted and stamped  
18 dated as received applications vanish from LPC files  
19 in part of in their entirety, and attach documents to  
20 an owner's signed application do not match the  
21 description sent to owner from and LPC staffer in a  
22 letter, which was purported to be a copy of paperwork  
23 in their files. Specific difference include: Date  
24 of receipt and approved differed by one month from  
25 approved applications in owner's possession. Owner

2 filed three application: Sprinkler with no  
3 attachments; architectural with 7 page attached or  
4 regular or legal size, NEP structure, et cetera as a  
5 third with the same attachments as in the  
6 architectural. But the LPC staffer only sent a copy  
7 of the architectural above and description, and  
8 staffer's first letter to me shows four attachments  
9 of which few are largescale none of which I reviewed  
10 or approved. I respectfully requests that I be  
11 permitted to complete and submit a complete  
12 documented history of what occurred, and that my file  
13 be guaranteed to be forwarded to the city agency  
14 tasked with investigating and prosecuting all people  
15 within LPC, other city agency and who used influence  
16 peddling to circumvent the rules, regulations and the  
17 mission of LPC. LPC's Chair who recently resigned  
18 did not do so to spend more time with her family, but  
19 rather under mounting pressure from groups of the  
20 city—in the city committed to landmarked presentation  
21 with integrity from all employees of LPC and the  
22 designation of approval of plans based solely on LPC  
23 rules, regulations and standards, and by quality  
24 personnel educated in the landmarked properties and  
25 their restoration and preservation, and with years of

2 professional work in the field not just bureaucratic  
3 political hacks with neither experience, expertise or  
4 commitment to the values for which LPC was created  
5 and exists. I am asking that 858's designation be  
6 rejected at this time and that in the future when LPC  
7 has cleaned up its inexperienced-inexplicable  
8 behavior, and helps me clean up the \$4 million  
9 litigation, which it has helped promoted that it can  
10 be once again be considered for landmarking. If  
11 anyone hear believes in aluminum siding, new  
12 storefront that fits 95 Madison Avenue versus the  
13 lease required restoration as per the architect  
14 Walter B. Melvin and his master plan of which 50% is  
15 completed for the 29<sup>th</sup> Street Section and a third is  
16 on order, the building entry then I would submit that  
17 they don't belong in this room or anywhere near  
18 anything called restoration or landmarking. Nothing  
19 will be lost by the action I request. Do not  
20 designate my property and-and help my family-and help  
21 us stand to win a significant lease obligation of  
22 more than \$14 million. By doing this, you lose  
23 nothing at all. You can come back and re-calendar  
24 and reschedule my property for landmarking. In the  
25 interim, we since 1970 have maintained and restored



2 this property above landmark standard without anyone  
3 twisting our arm, and without applications or  
4 anything else. There's another section of our  
5 restoration that is now in progress, and it stands to  
6 be completely trashing my building if you people do  
7 not reject this application at this time.

8 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much  
9 for your testimony. Panel, any questions?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: One question, if  
11 that's okay?

12 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: No problem.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. So your-  
14 you have testified that you are opposing the  
15 designation, but you mentioned specifically and in  
16 detail the process by which you received  
17 notification. Is that your biggest concern is how  
18 LPC went about notifying you?

19 RITA SKLAR: Absolutely not. They went  
20 behind my back. I'm a single owner. I am completely  
21 involved in the details of all the curves, all of the  
22 metal, the stone and everything. They specifically  
23 met with people who presented a picture that had one  
24 door, all aluminum siding to match the garbage that's  
25 there now. My lease specifically required

2 restoration, and shows five pages, and those five  
3 pages indicated a check and a check and a circle and  
4 a circle all manually, but that meant that that they  
5 had to match the existing four windows that were  
6 there. I stood and did a lease in a very narrow  
7 period of time with a tenant who I absolutely  
8 believed it. They changed their mind. They want to  
9 put in the cheapest garbage that they can, and get on  
10 with their lives. The picture that's shown in their  
11 plan is a single aluminum siding door. They went to  
12 Landmarks and Landmarks said, Oh, put in two doors  
13 and a little transom. It can be existing, which  
14 means aluminum siding. If anyone in this room  
15 believes in land marking, and believes that there is  
16 any owner who isn't only interested in saving money,  
17 and pretending--a foe job, then you don't belong  
18 here. I and my family have spent spend huge amounts  
19 of extra money through these years I've had  
20 stewardship. I am at the end of this period and the  
21 last segment that I'm working on is the ground floor  
22 master plan as designed by Walter B. Melvin whose  
23 eminent and now retired architect. His plan is in the  
24 hands of Landmarks. We showed it to a committee of  
25 people. The second section that we're working on is

2 now getting the courtyard unit, which is purely  
3 utilitarian with our AC. It's set that they've  
4 approved using the back area. I need the ability to  
5 say in terms of my litigation that I don't care if  
6 you landmark me in four months from now. It makes  
7 zero difference to me. I don't care if you don't,  
8 but right now to approve this after what's happened  
9 where they have absolutely put a \$14 million lease  
10 plus \$3.5 million in investment at risk. If this is  
11 the purpose of an organization not to landmark the  
12 building, but just destroy the financial stability of  
13 the building, it's a disgrace.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I understand.  
15 Thank you so much for your testimony today. That's  
16 all the questions I have, Chair Adams.

17 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much,  
18 Council Member. Thank you, Ms. Sklar for your  
19 testimony today. We're going to resume with LPC at  
20 this point and you are still under oath. Thank you  
21 very much. [background comments, pause] Okay. Now  
22 moving to Sunset Park, Brooklyn and just for a little  
23 bit of context, at the request of Council Member  
24 Menchaca, and the Sunset Park Landmarks Committee,  
25 LPC has been serving a large part of the Sunset Park

1 community and our analysis is ongoing. One of the  
2 buildings that we identified as eligible for  
3 designation through that process is the Dr. Maurice  
4 t. Lewis House, which was designed by New York  
5 Architect R. Thomas Short, and constructed in 1907.  
6 The restrained Renaissance Revival style building is  
7 a fine example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century residential  
8 architecture and is a significant example of single-  
9 family residential development in a neighborhood  
10 comprised mostly of row houses. On March 6, 2018,  
11 the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to  
12 designate the Dr. Maurice T. Lewis House as an  
13 individual landmark. Having held a hearing on the  
14 designation that day, 30 people spoke in favor  
15 including Council Member Carlos Menchaca,  
16 representative of Congress Member Valazquez, the New  
17 York Land Marks Conservancy, Historic Districts  
18 Council and residents of Sunset Park. Community  
19 Board 7 and Lot Community Development Center  
20 submitted written support and no one spoke or  
21 submitted a statement in opposition to the  
22 designation. The building is located in Brooklyn  
23 Sunset Park neighborhood on the corner of 55<sup>th</sup> Street  
24 and Fourth Avenue. The Sunset Park neighborhood  
25

1 developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup>–the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>  
2 Centuries as a residential community for the working  
3 waterfront of South Brooklyn. The neighborhood is  
4 largely made up of speculatively built row houses and  
5 primarily developed for the working and middle-class  
6 families. As illustrated in this map, development in  
7 the area was largely complete by 1916. The Lewis  
8 House stands out in the neighborhood due to its  
9 refined architectural character and prominent siting.  
10 At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fourth Avenue was a  
11 grand boulevard with a landscaped median lined with  
12 churches, trees, and mixed-use buildings. This 1905  
13 postcard looking north towards 54<sup>th</sup> Street shows the  
14 avenue's original design, and the site where the  
15 Lewis House would eventually be constructed in an  
16 empty lot on the right. Dr. Lewis began career in  
17 banking while continuing his 38-year-long practice as  
18 a physician, he was a founder, trustee and eventually  
19 president of the Baywood Savings Bank, which was  
20 located just a block away on Fifth Avenue. Dr. Lewis  
21 commissioned R–commissioned R. Thomas Short of the  
22 Firm Harden Short to design his new home. Harden  
23 began their partnership in 1901, and were prominent  
24 New York City architects in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.  
25

3 For the Lewis House, Short used a retrained  
4 Renaissance Revival style evoking a Renaissance era  
5 villa. The elegant building stands out in the  
6 neighborhood especially because so many of the other  
7 buildings were developed or build row houses along  
8 the numbered streets. Given the significance of the  
9 Dr. Maurice T. Lewis house and importance to the  
10 Sunset Set Park neighborhood, we recommend that the  
11 City Council uphold this designation. Now moving to  
12 East Harlem, I want to just give a little bit of  
13 context for the next three properties. The LPC was  
14 part of the Administration's multi-agency effort to  
15 plan for East Harlem's future. As you know, that  
16 plan was informed by recommendations from the East  
17 Harlem Neighborhood Plan put forward by a steering  
18 committee of elected officials, Community Board 11  
19 and community stakeholders. The steering committee's  
20 recommendations included one that LPC "preserve  
21 important East Harlem buildings and reinforce  
22 neighborhood character. LPC invested considerable  
23 resources into conducting a survey of the  
24 neighborhood as well as reviewing the recommendations  
25 of the steering committee, and local preservation  
organizations. Through this survey, LPC prioritized

1 three properties for designation. They embody East  
2 Harlem's unique development history, recognize the  
3 civic institutions and businesses that help shape the  
4 lives of the neighborhood's many immigrant groups,  
5 and they're some of the most architecturally  
6 significant buildings in the neighborhood. The  
7 former Richard Webber Harlem Packing House is a  
8 historic meat market building in East Harlem  
9 constructed in 1895 and originally part of a larger  
10 commercial slaughter house, meat packing and retail  
11 complex. Designed by the architectural firm of  
12 Bartholomew and John P. Walther for the prominent  
13 butcher Richard Webber, this Romanesque Revival and  
14 Renaissance Revival style building is a fine example  
15 of 19<sup>th</sup> Century architectural design and an intact  
16 reminder of East Harlem's commercial and industrial  
17 past. On March 27, 2018, the LPC voted to designate  
18 the building as an individual landmark having hear-  
19 having held a hearing on February 13, 2018. At that  
20 hearing and in written testimony, the Commission  
21 receive support from ten organizations and  
22 individuals including Borough President Gale Brewer  
23 representatives from the New York Landmarks  
24 Conservancy, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic  
25

1 District-Historic Districts Council, Marcus Garvey  
2 Park Alliance, Landmark East Harlem and East Harlem  
3 Preservation, Civitas, Lot Community Development and  
4 two individuals. No one spoke in opposition. The  
5 building is located on East 119<sup>th</sup> Street near the  
6 corner of Third Avenue. Richard Webber was an  
7 English immigrant and started a small butcher shop in  
8 East Harlem in the late 1870s. The company is very  
9 successful, and expanded into a large complex with a  
10 staff of 500. Webber maintained other businesses and  
11 at the time of his death in 1908 he was described by  
12 the New York Times as one of the largest butchers in  
13 the city if not the United States. Bartholomew and  
14 John Peter Walther designed the meat packing house,  
15 which was constructed in 1895. Active in the 19<sup>th</sup>  
16 and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the architect specialized  
17 in warehouses, factories and flats buildings and  
18 designed a number of buildings in Upper Manhattan.  
19 The formal design and high quality craftsmanship of  
20 the six story brick and stone packing house presented  
21 a sophisticated public space for Webber's operations.  
22 The complex remained in use by the Webber Meat  
23 Packing Company until 1928, after which the building  
24 served a variety of functions and even today you can  
25



1 see the terracotta cow head released that referred to  
2 the building's original function. The building is a  
3 powerful presence on the streetscape and given the  
4 significance and importance to the East Harlem  
5 neighborhood, we recommend that the City Council  
6 uphold this designation. Public school 109 was  
7 constructed in 1899, and transformed in 2015 into an  
8 affordable housing complex for local artists, is  
9 architecturally and culturally significant as a  
10 progressive era elementary school designed by the  
11 superintendent of school buildings Charles B. J.  
12 Schneider. At its public hearing on February 13,  
13 2018 and in written testimony, the Commission  
14 received support from 10 organizations and  
15 individuals including Borough President Gale Brewer,  
16 representatives of Civitas, Friends of the Upper East  
17 Side Historic District, Historic Districts Council,  
18 Landmark East Harlem, Lot Community Development  
19 Corporation and the New York Landmarks Conservancy as  
20 well as two local residents. PS 109 is located on  
21 East 99<sup>th</sup> Street between Second and Third Avenues.  
22 Situated in between the German enclave of Yorkville  
23 to the south and the Italian section of East Harlem  
24 to the north, at the time of its construction the  
25

1 blocks immediately surrounding PS 109 were filled  
2 with an extraordinarily diverse array of residents  
3 many of whom worked at the neighborhood's industrial  
4 enterprises along the East River. Nearly half of the  
5 population is foreign born, and the new immigrants  
6 had arrive in large numbers from Ireland, Germany,  
7 Italy and Russia. Built during a time of burgeoning  
8 school enrollments and an increase in the immigrant  
9 populations in East Harlem, PS 109's five stories can  
10 accommodate more than, 2,000 students. The building  
11 is clad in limestone and brick with a stylistic  
12 expression that joins elements of late Gothic, and  
13 French Renaissance, and the order of Beaux-Art  
14 planning. For only the second time at PS 109, Setti  
15 (sic) used the H Plan layout, which he adopted as the  
16 plan of choice for mid-block schools. Cutting  
17 through the whole block from East 99<sup>th</sup> to East 100  
18 Street, the H Plan consisted of parallel wings  
19 running two straight-street-facing courtyard spaces  
20 and was intended to create large recreational areas  
21 while protecting students' access to light and air  
22 from future development of neighboring buildings.  
23 These courtyards were haven—were havens on a site  
24 sandwiched between tenement housing and two elevated  
25

1 subway stations at Second and Third Avenue. This is  
2 the school right here in its original context. PS  
3 109 played an important stabilizing role within the  
4 changing community of East Harlem throughout the 20th  
5 Century offering evening lectures and adult education  
6 classes and welcoming thousands of New Puerto Rican  
7 residents to the neighborhood. In the 1950s the  
8 blocks immediately surround PS 109 were radically  
9 transformed by urban renewal and a NYCHA public  
10 housing project, the George Washington Houses. In  
11 the bottom left photograph from 1952 you can see PS  
12 109 peaking out across partially cleared tenements on  
13 East 98<sup>th</sup> and 99<sup>th</sup> Street. PS 109 functioned as a  
14 school until 1996 when due to its poor condition it  
15 was shuttered and threated with demolition. Artspace,  
16 a non-profit organization began redeveloping the  
17 building in the mid-2000s restoring its exterior  
18 while renovating its interior into artist housing and  
19 studio space that opened in 2015. PS 109 remains an  
20 important symbol of an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century moment in  
21 which school architecture called on cosmopolitan  
22 historical traditions to enrich the lives of the  
23 entire community. After its award winning  
24 restoration, it continues to be an important civic  
25

2 and cultural icon today. Given the significance of  
3 PS 109 and El Barrio's Artspace, an importance to the  
4 East Harlem neighborhood, we recommend that the City  
5 Council uphold this designation. Benjamin Franklin  
6 High School now the Manhattan Center for Science and  
7 Mathematics located on Pleasant Avenue is Georgian  
8 Revival school with neoclassical elements from 1942.  
9 It was built to house East Harlem's first high  
10 school. The school featured and experimental  
11 curriculum referred to as Citizen Centered Community  
12 Education that was implemented and developed by the  
13 pioneering educators sociologists and East Harlem  
14 resident Leonard Covello to serve the diverse  
15 immigrant community of East Harlem. At the public  
16 hearing on February 13, 2018 and in written  
17 testimony, the Commission heard from 11 organizations  
18 and individuals including the Office of the Manhattan  
19 Borough President Gale Brewer, Lot Community  
20 Development Corporation, Civitas, the Vito  
21 Marcantonio Forum, the New York City Landmarks  
22 Conservancy, the Historic Districts—the Historic  
23 Districts Council, Friends of the Upper East Side  
24 Historic Districts, Landmark East Harlem, East Harlem  
25 Preservation and from East Harlem residents. No one

1 spoke in opposition. Looking along the eastern edge  
2 of East Harlem along the Harlem River the school is  
3 bounded by Pleasant Avenue, East 116<sup>th</sup> and FDR Drive.  
4 Benjamin Franklin High School was built from 1940 to  
5 '42 and designed by Eric Kevin, the head architect of  
6 the new construction for the Board of Education. As  
7 head architect, Kevin oversaw the construction of  
8 more than 100 schools as New York City's school  
9 system expanded to meet increasing enrollments. The  
10 school has an impressive Georgian Revival design with  
11 many classical details. The building is a  
12 significant feature of East Harlem's built  
13 environment with its river front location, its  
14 placement just north of Central Park and the central  
15 positioning of the building's entrance on access with  
16 east 115<sup>th</sup> Street. Benjamin Franklin High School was  
17 constructed to be a highly visible feature of the  
18 community reflecting a promise of broad community  
19 service through education. Franklin High School has  
20 had a significant impact on the social history of  
21 East Harlem and represents the rich history of social  
22 and political engagement of East Harlem in the mid  
23 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Established as East Harlem's first  
24 high school, not a trade or a vocational high school,  
25

1 under the leadership of the school leader/activist  
2 Leonard Covello, Benjamin Franklin High School was  
3 intended to be a citizen centered community school  
4 that actively engaged its students and the broader  
5 community in social and political reform and provided  
6 the educational and recreational activities that are  
7 now expected in public education, but were rare at  
8 that time. Envisioned in the 1930s as a means to  
9 improve the opportunities of the Italian immigrant  
10 community through bilingual education and community  
11 engagement, Benjamin Franklin High School opened as a  
12 neighborhood—as the neighborhood began to experience  
13 significant demographic changes. The completion of  
14 the purpose built high school in 1942 allowed Covello  
15 to expand its educational program and better serve  
16 the community by providing free event space and 24  
17 access-24-hour access to the community. The school  
18 not only became an important space to ease the  
19 increasing tense—increasingly tense race relations  
20 faced in the community, but also adapted its  
21 curriculum to meet the needs of the Puerto Rican  
22 migrations by providing orientations in Spanish for  
23 the Puerto Rican Cultural Club and actively engaging  
24 the new families of East Harlem. Throughout the brief  
25

3 life of Benjamin Franklin High School, as a community  
4 centric school, Covello and other progressive  
5 educators sought to strengthen and support their  
6 community, and improve the social and economic  
7 conditions of the community. The building now houses  
8 the top ranked Manhattan School for Science and  
9 Mathematics, and Isaac Newton Middle School for Math  
10 and Science. Positioned between the Harlem River,  
11 the park and the dense neighborhood of Pleasant  
12 Village, Benjamin Franklin High School is a  
13 substantial presence in East Harlem and continues to  
14 play an important role in the city. Given the  
15 significance of this school, and this building it's  
16 a--and it's importance to the East Harlem  
17 neighborhood, we recommend that the City Council  
18 uphold this designation. And for the final one, we're  
19 going to Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The Dime Saving  
20 Bank of Williamsburg is a neoclassical building  
21 constructed between 1906 and '08 during the period of  
22 growth that occurred in the neighborhood after the  
23 completion of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903.  
24 Designed by the prominent Brooklyn architect firm of  
25 Helmle and Huberty, the building is a significant  
example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century savings bank that

1 used a grand classical design to evoke a sense of  
2 security, prosperity and civic pride among the  
3 largely low-income immigrant community. At its  
4 public hearing on March 6, 2018, and in written  
5 testimony, the Commission received support from five  
6 organizations and individuals including the property  
7 owner, Council Member Antonio Reynoso, Congresswoman  
8 Nydia Velazquez and representatives of the Historic  
9 District Council and the New York Landmarks  
10 Conservancy. The building is located at the corner  
11 of Havemeyer Streets and South 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Industry  
12 flourished in Williamsburg along the East River  
13 Waterfront during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century and numerous  
14 savings banks were established for the growing  
15 immigrant population to encourage thrift.  
16 Incorporated in 1864 by a group of prominent  
17 community members, the Dime Savings Bank of  
18 Williamsburg occupied a few small offices before  
19 moving to its new headquarters. Their original  
20 building is no longer in existence. (sic) In 1903  
21 the completion of the Williamsburg Bridge shifted the  
22 neighborhood's financial center from Lower Broadway,  
23 outlined in blue on the map to the Williamsburg  
24 Bridge Plaza at the Bridge Approach outlined in red.  
25



1 The Dime Savings Bank of Williamsburg acquired two  
2 corner lots facing the plaza in 1906 and commissioned  
3 the architectural firm of Helmle and Huberty to  
4 design its new headquarters. Several designated New  
5 York City Landmark bank buildings are located in the  
6 vicinity of the Williamsburg, excuse me the  
7 Williamsburg Bridge Plaza, as you can see on this  
8 map. Helmle and Huberty were distinguished Brooklyn  
9 architects known for designing banks, park buildings  
10 and churches. After the new Dime Savings Bank of  
11 Williamsburg headquarters opened in 1908, the  
12 Brooklyn Daily Eagle boasted that the completed  
13 structure readily commends itself as one of the most  
14 attractive financial institution buildings in the  
15 city. The monumental Indiana limestone building has  
16 many classical architectural details. This circa  
17 1910 image captures the Williamsburg Bridge Plaza as  
18 viewed from the designated Williamsburg Trust Company  
19 building. The Dime Savings Bank is visible on the  
20 far right by red arrow. Occupying one of the most  
21 prominent positions on the plaza, modern  
22 transportation corridors have since divided the plaza  
23 into several distinct sections, but the remaining  
24 bank buildings recall a time when opulent financial  
25

2 institutions provided the backdrop to the bridge  
3 approach. In 1923, the bank's trustees purchased two  
4 lots behind the property to enlarge the building.  
5 Completed in 1925, the addition nearly doubled the  
6 size of the bank and blended in seamlessly with the  
7 original building by extending the articulated side  
8 elevation on South 5<sup>th</sup> to a neighboring row house.  
9 The building, which retains a high level of  
10 integrity, has a strong presence in the neighborhood  
11 and its significance for its elegant design and  
12 history associated with Williamsburg's Historic  
13 Financial Center. Given the significance of the Dime  
14 Savings Bank of Williamsburg we recommend that the  
15 City Council uphold this designation.

16 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much  
17 for your testimony, Ms. Kersavage and our extensive  
18 testimony today [laughter] on all of these very  
19 beautiful historic properties. Again, we and the  
20 City of New York should be very, very proud that we  
21 are home to these buildings. They are absolutely  
22 beautiful. So, thank you very much for your  
23 testimony.

24 LISA KERSAVAGE: Thank you.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Panel, are there any  
3 questions at this point. Okay, you may be excused.  
4 Thank you. Are there any more members of the public  
5 that wish to testify on behalf of any of these items  
6 today? Seeing none, I will now close the public  
7 hearing on these items. We will lay over LU 115 and  
8 I will call for a vote in accordance with the  
9 recommendations of the local Council members to  
10 approve LUs 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, and 121.  
11 Counsel, please call the roll.

12 LEGAL COUNSEL: Adams.

13 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Aye.

14 LEGAL COUNSEL: Barron.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I vote aye.

16 LEGAL COUNSEL: Koo.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Aye.

18 LEGAL COUNSEL: By a vote of 3 in the  
19 affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0 abstentions, the  
20 items are recommended for approval before the Full  
21 Land Use Committee, and do you want to hold the vote  
22 open?

23 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: We will hold the vote  
24 open for about 15 minutes.

2 LEGAL COUNSEL: Okay. [background  
3 comments, pause]

4 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Alright, just to  
5 advise the panel, and the audience, we will revisit  
6 LU 115 tomorrow morning. What time?

7 FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic]

8 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: 10:45. I'd like to  
9 thank the members of the public, my colleagues,  
10 Counsel and land Use staff for attending today's  
11 hear. This meeting is open. Thank you. [pause]  
12 This hearing is officially closed. [gavel]

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND  
MARITIME USES

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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 July 12, 2018