

# Lisa Kersavage

## Testimony of Lisa Kersavage

**Before the Committee on Rules, Privileges, Elections, Standards and Ethics of The New York  
New York City Council**

**May 6, 2026**

Thank you, Chair Ung. Good morning to you and the members of the Committee on Rules, Privileges, Elections, Standards and Ethics. I am honored to be Mayor Mamdani's nominee to be Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I believe the work of LPC is important, and that the preservation of historic resources can support communities, foster economic development, and contribute to the vitality of New York City. I bring to the Commission more than two decades of experience working at the intersection of historic preservation, urban planning, and sustainability, as well as a strong track record of executive leadership in both government and the non-profit sector. I believe my experience and approach to preservation will enable me to serve as an effective Chair, and I hope you will support my nomination.

An interest in architectural history and urban planning brought me to the field and has shaped the direction of my career. Having a lifelong dream of living and working in New York City, I was excited to move here for graduate studies at Columbia University, where I focused on the public policy and urban planning aspects of historic preservation.

After working at a preservation non-profit on the Upper East Side, I held senior positions at the Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS), where the advocacy was deliberately interdisciplinary, looking at how preservation can contribute to neighborhood plans, rezonings, and economic development projects. That approach to historic preservation has been an important guiding principle to me. At MAS, I led a large project to improve the energy efficiency and sustainability of historic buildings. Later, I was able to apply my resiliency and climate change interest, leading an ambitious design competition sponsored by the Environmental Defense Fund and Van Alen Institute, convening global teams of interdisciplinary experts to reimagine a more sustainable Lower Mississippi River Delta.

Subsequently, I joined LPC, where I have worked for 11 years, serving first as the Director of Strategic Planning and Special Projects and for the last seven years as Executive Director. In the time I have been at the agency, I've helped make advancements to increase the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of our permitting process, to designate significant historic resources across the city – prioritizing places that reflect the City's diversity – and to educate property owners about permitting processes and grant opportunities.

Taking on the role of Chair at this time is personally important, as I am motivated to help advance the goals of the Mamdani administration to address affordability, increase housing, and make government work for all New Yorkers.

# Lisa Kersavage

As Chair, addressing housing issues would be a priority and would align with my interdisciplinary approach to the field. Finding the right balance between protecting the character of New York City's historic districts and landmarks while allowing for the development of new housing is an obligation that I am confident in my ability to take on.

Another priority for me is to continue to advance equitable representation in designations, prioritizing designations that reflect New York City's diversity, those that are in areas less represented by landmarks, and striving to tell the story of all New Yorkers. In addition, I believe it is important to work closely with agencies like the Department of City Planning to identify opportunities for preservation in areas planned for growth.

Supporting property owners of designated landmarks is another priority. As Chair, I would continue advancing our work to support property owners, ensure we are issuing guidance that is clear, and that we consider rule amendments to expedite the type of work typically undertaken by small property owners.

Another priority is addressing sustainability issues in our historic resources. Encouraging work that sensitively improves energy efficiency and improves resiliency such as floodproofing is important, and I will consider measures to streamline permitting that supports this important type of work.

Finally, supporting and nurturing LPC's staff is also a priority. Over my time at LPC I have witnessed their dedication to the field and to the New York City residents they serve, and I am honored to lead such a talented team.

I am excited for the future of preservation in New York City and thank the City Council for considering and supporting my nomination as Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Thank you again for offering the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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THE NEW YORK  
LANDMARKS  
CONSERVANCY

Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Rules, Privileges, Elections,  
Standards and Ethics

May 6, 2026

Dear Chair Ung and Committee Members:

I am Peg Breen, President of The New York Landmarks Conservancy, a 53 year old preservation organization that works to save the City's architectural heritage through advocacy, loans, grants and technical help to owners of historic properties.

I am pleased to support the nomination of Lisa Kersavage as Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. She comes with a deep background in preservation and has served at the Commission as it worked to make rules and applications more user friendly and ensure that buildings and places important to the City's diverse communities are represented in designations.

This is an important position. When your predecessors on the City Council passed the City's landmarks law they noted that it was designed to protect the City's history and identity. They also said preservation would be important to the City's economy.

And it has been. An economic study we commissioned found that preservation provides some 9000 local jobs and paychecks of over \$500 million each year. Heritage tourism is a key component of our visitor industry.

Preservation also has a role to play in assisting our housing needs. The Commission routinely approves appropriate new buildings in historic districts and supports the conversion of commercial and civic buildings into housing.

While the number of landmark buildings and districts is impressive, historic districts still take up only some 5 percent of the City's land. They are not hampering housing production. And there are buildings and neighborhoods that still deserve to be designated.

We look forward to working with Lisa as the Commission continues to protect our heritage and our economy.

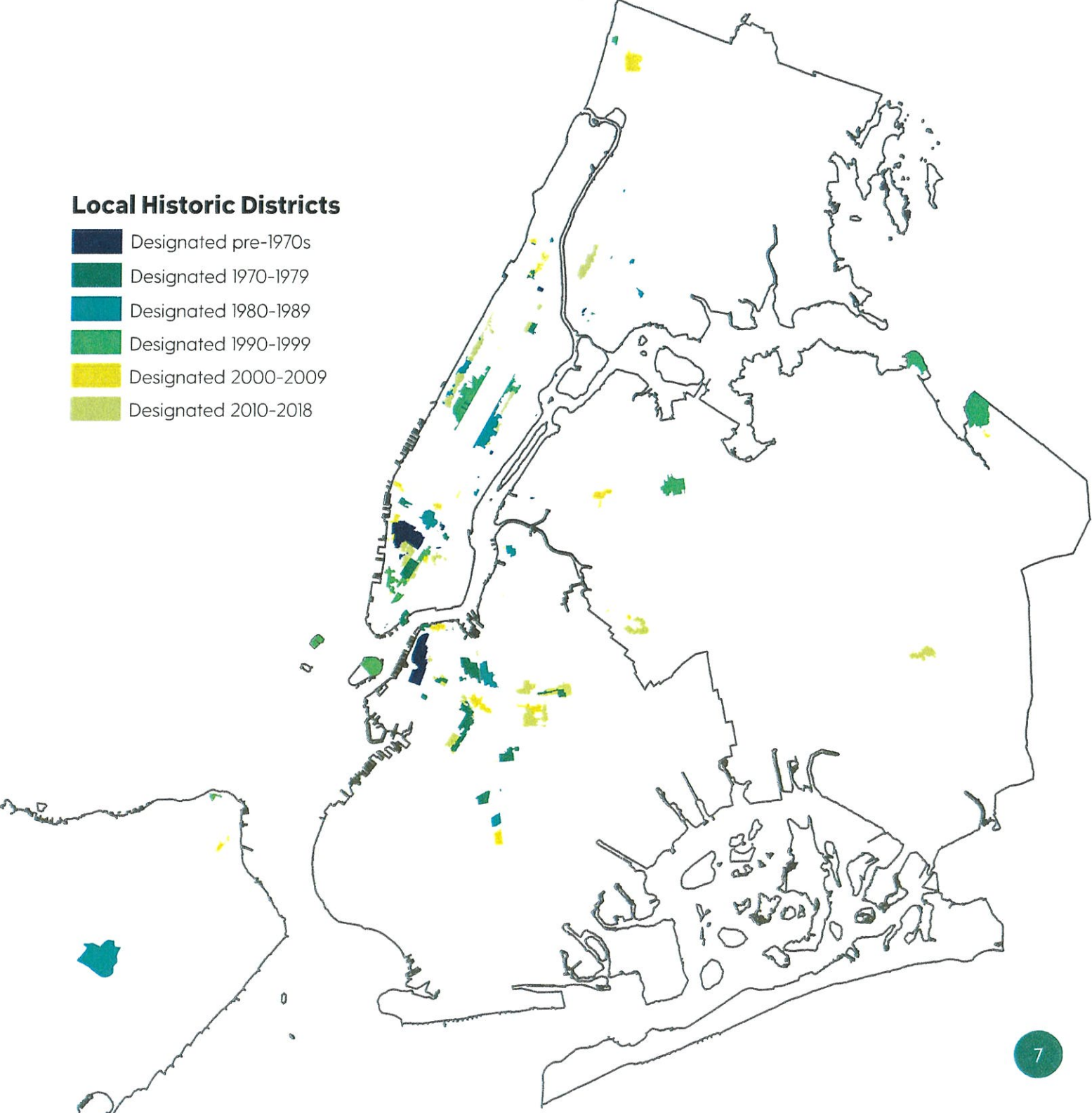
Thank you.



# Only 3.8% of New York City's lots fall under the purview of historic preservation regulation.

## Local Historic Districts

- Designated pre-1970s
- Designated 1970-1979
- Designated 1980-1989
- Designated 1990-1999
- Designated 2000-2009
- Designated 2010-2018





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May 6, 2026

**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Rules, Privileges, Elections, Standards and Ethics**

**Re: Appointment of Lisa Kersavage's as the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission**

Chair Ung and Members of the City Council:

FRIENDS of the Upper East Side, founded in 1982, is an independent nonprofit historic preservation organization dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy, livability, and sense of place of the Upper East Side. FRIENDS is especially proud of Ms. Kersavage's connection to our organization, having served as our Executive Director from 1999 to 2004. As stewards of the Upper East Side, FRIENDS remains committed to preserving the distinct character of its neighborhoods.

We are pleased to support the appointment of Ms. Lisa Kersavage as the chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). With more than a decade of professional experience at the LPC, including service as Executive Director since 2019, Ms. Kersavage assumes this role with a comprehensive understanding of New York City's historic built environment, as well as the agency's operations, policy, and strategic priorities. Her tenure has been marked by a focus on improving agency performance and addressing the longstanding backlog of properties that were heard but not designated. We also commend her contributions to the LPC's Equity Framework, which prioritizes the designation of sites representing the city's diverse cultural and social histories.

Yorkville—rich in immigrant history and defined by its human-scale fabric—faces increasing development pressure, in part driven by the Second Avenue Subway. In response, FRIENDS has worked to identify and advocate for sites that embody the neighborhood's unique identity, submitting 36 Requests for Evaluation over the past decade. However, our experience in Yorkville highlights a critical concern we hope Ms. Kersavage will address: the increasing difficulty of securing designations for sites that merit protection before they are lost to the wrecking ball.

We urge the City Council to query the LPC on its recent evaluation criteria, particularly in light of the loss of two Yorkville buildings that we believe merited landmark designation: St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church (1893) and the Doelger Building (1930), the latter noted for its distinctive Art Deco terra-cotta ornamentation. Despite new research underscoring their significance, our recent RFEs were denied; St. Elizabeth's has since been demolished, and the Doelger Building now faces a similar fate. We look to Ms. Kersavage's leadership



to ensure that the LPC's review process is responsive enough to protect such vulnerable resources before these irreversible losses occur.

As noted in a 2024 report by Village Preservation, designation rates declined significantly during Mayor Adams' tenure, particularly in the Manhattan core. FRIENDS views the confirmation of Ms. Kersavage as a pivotal opportunity for the Mamdani administration to reverse this troubling trend. We continue to advocate for stronger protections for the Upper East Side's architectural and cultural heritage, including the designation of additional historic districts east of Third Avenue. Such measures are essential to addressing the accelerating pace of redevelopment, institutional expansion, and the ongoing loss of affordable housing. We urge the Council to seek a commitment from Ms. Kersavage to prioritize these long-overdue protections and restore the LPC's proactive role in preservation under this new administration.

FRIENDS looks forward to working with Chair Kersavage to advance new landmark designations in Yorkville and safeguard the Upper East Side's historic fabric, and welcomes the opportunity to learn more about her vision for protecting the neighborhood's cultural and architectural heritage.

Thank you.

# LANDMARK WEST!

THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

6th May, 2026

Honorable Sandra Ung  
Chair, Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections  
250 Broadway, Suite 1866  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Lisa Kersavage Appointment for Chair, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

Dear Council Member Ung,

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to support the appointment of Lisa Kersavage as the Chair of the Landmark Preservation Commission.

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural and cultural heritage of the Upper West Side.

Over the years, we have had the pleasure of working with Lisa in her prior roles and across a variety of landmark issues. With Lisa, the City has an experienced official who understands the intricacies and flexibility of the Landmarks Law and can begin work, fully up to speed on day one.

While her knowledge of the entire NYC landmarks process is extensive, it is her ability to respond to special circumstances and preservation issues with extraordinary élan that makes her an exceptional candidate for this important position.

In recent memory, we've witnessed Lisa's commitment to addressing vulnerable buildings. The current most vulnerable NYC landmark is West-Park Presbyterian Church. We are confident that, upon analysis of the facts, the reality of this self-imposed hardship will be clear to the Commission.

Lisa has also worked to recognize underrepresented communities and typologies. We all know that landmark status can not only stabilize a community and protect affordability but also bring socio-economic benefits, including recognition, civic pride, and even tourism. It's important that new and unrepresented stories continue to be told and written.

The Upper West Side is home to a cacophony of architectural styles and typologies, and diverse histories, many of which still remain unprotected and are thus far still unrecognized by the Commission:

- We have significant sites of Urban Renewal, including NYCHA's Amsterdam Houses, one of the first postwar housing projects in Manhattan, and the first site acquired through eminent domain to clear the historically Black and Puerto Rican neighborhood of San Juan Hill.
- Under the current White House administration, Modernism is under attack. Despite having numerous Modern structures within our boundary, among them, one of the country's most significant Modernist campuses, Lincoln Center, remains unrecognized as a landmark.
- We also have extant model tenements that bear witness to the evolution of housing reforms in the City. Not protected.
- And even the first of its typology—P.S. 165, architect C.B.J. Snyder's first use of the H-Plan for public schools, which became the standard city-wide, unprotected.

Despite past success, there is still so much work to do. We hope the Commission can be more responsive to the broader history that is the Upper West Side and see designations that reflect the true breadth of our dense, diverse, and deserving neighborhood.

In summary, Lisa Kersavage possesses all of the characteristics we think are required of the Chair of this essential city agency: expertise, enthusiasm, intelligence, and objectivity. We believe that Lisa Kersavage not only has the qualifications but also the dedication to adhere to the principles established by the founders of this important legislation that secures our existing landmarks and historic districts, as well as those buildings and sites yet to be designated.

We look forward to working with Lisa and her agency to achieve these mutual goals.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



Testimony before the New York City Council's Committee on Rules, Privileges, Elections, Standards, and Ethics on May 6, 2026 regarding the confirmation of Lisa Kersavage as Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair

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**232 EAST 11TH STREET**

**NEW YORK NY 10003**

**212-475-9585**

**VILLAGEPRESERVATION.ORG**

My name is Juan Rivero, and I am speaking on behalf of Village Preservation, a 46 year old non-profit dedicated to preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo.

We submitted [a report to the City Council](#) last year analyzing all landmark designations in New York City since in 1965; and this report makes one thing objectively clear: Since the late 2010s, the number of landmark designations per year in the city has been lower than in all prior years of the Commission's existence. And this dramatic decrease has manifested itself in every part of the city. The outer boroughs, Upper Manhattan, and the Manhattan core have all seen markedly fewer landmark designations in recent years than in prior periods, with many parts of the city seeing a drop of 90% or more. This is not because of COVID, as the trend has extended well beyond those years, and it's not because of other external factors. New designations simply plummeted after the end of the de Blasio Administration, and this trend accelerated throughout the Adams Administration.

There has been no lack of broadly supported and exhaustively documented landmark designation proposals rejected by the Commission, as also documented in our report. These have included proposals for the oldest synagogues in the Bronx, the city's first Spanish language church, a Harlem site where Martin Luther King Jr.'s life was saved and where Black nurses made labor history, sites where women's suffrage was won and gay rights were contested, as well as sites key to the history of people with disabilities.

In tandem with the precipitous drop in new landmark designations, there has been a documented rise in the percentage of new designations applied to sites that already enjoy some degree of protection — some already landmarked as parts of historic districts, others protected from demolition or change by other existing regulatory mechanisms. This is not to say that those designations were bad or wrong, but that they have been happening on sites where they have little impact—sites under no



immediate or foreseeable threat. And, while these few sites are designated, some of the many that are threatened keep succumbing to the wrecking ball or are left in a precarious state, vulnerable to imminent erasure. This would seem to run wholly counter to the purpose of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

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Whoever the next Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission is, we strongly urge the Council to push them on these issues. The Council can and should challenge them on whether they will allow this trend to continue or whether they will make the Commission live up to its stated purpose, which is to preserve and protect our city's varied and diverse histories and heritage.

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/6/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisa Kersavage

Address: 253 BROADWAY

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

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

THE COUNCIL  
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in favor  in opposition

Date: May 6, 2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ZEYNEP TURAN

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: FRIENDS OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE

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

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[ ]

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/6/2026

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Name: SEAN KHORSANDI

Address: 45 WEST 67TH ST

I represent: LANDMARK WEST!

Address: 45 WEST 67TH ST.

**THE COUNCIL  
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Name: Peg Beever  
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I represent: Myself

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