

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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August 14, 2018  
Start: 12:17 p.m.  
Recess: 2:41 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

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)

Captain Steven Vinueza (sp?), Commanding Officer  
NYPD Erie Basin Auto Pound

Matt Drury, Director, Governmental Relations  
New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

Michael Clarke, Attorney, Legal Bureau  
New York City Police Department

Lieutenant Mark Torrey, NYPD Bomb Squad

Jason Ortiz, Director, Political and Strategic  
Affairs. Department of Citywide Administrative  
Services

Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research  
Landmarks Preservation Commission

Ali Rasoulinejad, Director of Community and  
Intergovernmental Affairs, Landmarks Preservation  
Commission

Stephen Rhineardt, Architect, New York City Police  
Department

Bentley Meeker, Owner, Historic Garage/Stable at 161  
West 132<sup>nd</sup> St., Central Harlem Historic District

Jason Jackson, Harlem Resident

Jordan Press, Senior Vice President  
Constantinople & Vallone Consulting

Orlando Rodriguez Appearing for:  
Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Liz Volchok, Heritage Development Assistant  
Municipal Arts Society of New York

Simeon Bankoff, Historic Districts Council

Andrea Goldwyn, Landmarks Conservancy

Valerie Jo Bradley, President, Save Harlem Now

Rachel Lacock, President, West 132<sup>nd</sup> Block  
Association

Sedirea (sp?) Asberry Crestfield, Mount Morris Park  
Community Improvement Association

Angel Ayon, Vice President, Save Harlem Now

Michael Henry Adams, Authored *Harlem Lost and Found*

Sherry Culpepper, Lifelong Harlem Resident

Bria Culpepper

Antoinette Hamlin, President, New Amsterdam Musical  
Association, NAMA

Willie Mack, Chairman, Board of Directors, New  
Amsterdam Musical Association, NAMA

Andrea Stewart, Treasurer, New Amsterdam Musical  
Association, NAMA



[sound check] [gavel]

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Good afternoon.

Welcome to this meeting of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses. I am Council Member Adrienne Adams, the Chair of the Subcommittee. We are joined today by Council Members Koo and Menchaca. Today, we will be holding hearings a historic district designation, the designation of a fire station and police station as individual historic landmarks, and two lease of real property by the New Yorkers Police Department. The first item we will hear is LU 175, an application submitted by the New York City Police Department and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services for renewal of an existing lease for the acquisition of property located at 700 Columbia Street, Block 612, Lot 250, and part of Lot 205 in Red Hook, Brooklyn. The Police Department has leased this property since 1994 for use as a vehicular evidence storage facility that has the capacity of over 1,700 vehicles. The approval of the original lease was conditioned on the city providing \$50,000 a year for the maintenance of the Coffee Street Pier now known as Valentino Park. When this application was before the City Planning

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Commission, the NYPD expressed its continuing  
commitment to fund maintenance of the park through an  
interagency agreement with the Department of Parks  
and Recreation. This facility is located in Council  
Member Menchaca's district. Okay. I'd like to  
representatives of the NYPD to testify at this time  
and the Parks Department as well. We have Captain  
Steven Vinueza; agency attorney Michael Clarke, and  
Matt Drury okay from New York City Parks. Before you  
begin, Counsel will swear you in. Thank you.

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

CAPTAIN VINUEZA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, you may begin.

[pause]

CAPTAIN VINUEZA: Alright, good afternoon  
Chair Adams and members of the Council. I'm Captain  
Steven VINUEZA (sp?), the Commanding Officer of the  
New York City Police Department's Erie Basin Auto  
Pound. On behalf of the Police Commissioner James P.  
O'Neill I'm pleased to testify before your committed

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2 today about renewing our current location. The Erie  
3 Basin Auto Pound is part of the NYPD Property Clerk  
4 Division, which is—which is responsible for handling,  
5 cataloging, safeguarding and storing property that  
6 comes into the possession of the NYPD. The division  
7 is tasked—tasked with one of the most important  
8 duties of the NYPD, ensuring citizens' property is  
9 returned to them promptly and making sure evidence is  
10 preserved and produced in court. The Erie Basin Auto  
11 Pound is specifically used by the NYPD to store cars,  
12 which have been towed for reasons other than parking  
13 violations. This includes situations where the  
14 vehicle's operator has been arrested or where the  
15 vehicle has been seized because it is evidence or the  
16 instrumentality of a crime. In 2017, we 4,175  
17 vehicles and motorcycles stored in the facility.  
18 Currently, there are approximately 2,700 vehicles on  
19 site. We are staffed by 32 NYPD employees. The Erie  
20 Basin Auto Pound is always open. The—though the  
21 public may only retrieve vehicles on Monday to Friday  
22 from 8:00 to 3:00 p.m. In 2017, 1,140 civilians  
23 visited the facility to retrieve their vehicles.  
24 There is no existing space in New York City which  
25 will meet our needs if we were forced to relocate.

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2 At 947,034 square feet this facility is massive.  
3 With space in the city in dwindling supply, we cannot  
4 find another space to store this evidence. Not  
5 approving this lease would significantly impact the  
6 operations of the department. Under the previous  
7 lease, the NYPD provided \$50,000 for the maintenance  
8 of the Lewis Brown, Sr.-Jr. Pier-parking pier. I am  
9 pleased to say that we are committed to—we are  
10 committed to continuing to provide that money should  
11 this lease be approved. These funds have been  
12 utilized by the Parks Department towards the cost of  
13 a full-time City Park Worker or CPW to provide  
14 maintenance and operation support for the park as  
15 part of a larger mobile crew. This maintenance  
16 approach has helped ensure that it is consistently  
17 one of the highest ranked parks in the city, and we—  
18 and we look forward to continuing to work with our  
19 colleagues in the Parks Department. Thank you for  
20 letting me testify today. My colleagues and I look  
21 forward to answering any questions that you may have.

22 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, Captain.

23 Anyone else? Okay, at this time, I would like to  
24 recognize my colleague Council Member Menchaca for  
25 your questions and remarks.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you.  
Thank you, Chair and thank you for coming and  
presenting today. There are a few things I want to  
just kind of highlight and then maybe ask a few  
questions as we move forward, but the first thing I  
want to say is just thank you for-for your continued  
cooperation as we continue to understand more and  
more about what-what we have in front of us. This is-  
we're in a kind of land use review process right now,  
and one of the great things about a public hearing  
like this is that we get to understand it in its  
entirety, and as the local representative for the  
district, I'm really representing the people's voice  
and trying to understand their needs in this  
conversation, and how we can work together. One of  
the great thing about this particular application is  
that there are multiple agencies working in tandem.  
When you first look at it, you're like you're like  
hey, NYPD is working with the Parks Department, and  
you do DCAS who is doing the leases. In a recent  
meeting we had all those agencies including the  
Mayor's office, our Land Use Central and my-my  
district staff. What that said to me was the power of  
collaboration, the power of coalition and how great

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2 that the history of this park--and I'm going to read  
3 some prepared statements--really were born out of that  
4 cooperation. That started 20 years ago, and that's  
5 what we're trying to honor today, that initial  
6 commitment, the history of the neighborhood and how  
7 we can move forward in a more transparent and  
8 accountable way. That's our work and role today, and  
9 so thank you for your willingness to collaborate. We  
10 are considering an agreement with a private property  
11 owner in Red Hook, and as you know, as we all  
12 understand, this agreement would allow the NYPD to  
13 continue its operations of an evidence and vehicle  
14 storage facility on the Erie Basing and Breakwater in  
15 Red Hook. I will add in this note that we are  
16 essentially extending another--a lease of ten years,  
17 and what I want to--I want to hint to you now is that  
18 I think that this might be the last ten years that I  
19 see the city wanting to do such a thing at this  
20 location, and that the idea of--of--of a new use, a use  
21 that brings more waterfront access to the community  
22 and other amenities of the neighborhood through a  
23 planning process, might yield--this might be the last  
24 time that the city I think should approve such a  
25 thing, and what a beautiful thing that we can do that

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2 at the front end of a lease and work with NYPD to  
3 plan this out so that we cannot be at a pressure  
4 point like we find ourselves today. My role in this  
5 process is to reflect the voice of the Red Hook  
6 community. So, I'm going to do that today. Now,  
7 everyone knows the history of the current agreement  
8 between the NYPD and Erie Basin Marine Associates.,  
9 but there is an important history, one that many of  
10 our constituents know intimately. In the mid 1990s,  
11 when this agreement was first contemplated, New York  
12 City and Red Hook were very different places. Red  
13 Hook's residents built a vibrant community without  
14 adequate public investment or resources. In fact, we  
15 continue to do that building today. Transportation  
16 and food access were, as they continue to be,  
17 substandard and waterfront access was non-existent.  
18 It was in this context that NYPD identified the Erie  
19 Basin Breakwater as a preferred site for vehicle and  
20 evidence storage, a large parking lot, and a  
21 warehouse, and at that time almost everyone said no,  
22 the local Council Member said no, the State Assembly  
23 member and State Senate Member said no, the community  
24 group said no. They said no because of a massive  
25 investment—a massive investment into an NYPD facility

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2 was inappropriate at the time in neighborhood where  
3 residents had legitimate needs that were being  
4 ignored, and as a result of the significant  
5 opposition, a compromise was found. This lease would  
6 be predicated on a significant investment into public  
7 waterfront access in Red Hook. The first investment  
8 was an ongoing payment of \$50,000, as you mentioned,  
9 and each year to maintain the yet to be built park at  
10 the end of Coffee Street. This park known as Louis  
11 Valentino, Jr. Park and Pier and it's had major  
12 success. How many of you just by raising hands have  
13 been to Valentino Pier Park in Red Hook? Raise your  
14 hands. You're missing out. You're missing out? I'm  
15 just letting you know now it's really beautiful. It's  
16 a really, really beautiful park and you should go.  
17 This original Planning Commission—let's see. Okay, a  
18 stunning, unique place where you could see the  
19 Statue of Liberty. It's beautiful. It's absolutely  
20 gorgeous and this original Planning Commission  
21 approval also called for another critical component  
22 of Red Hook's Waterfront access, the Columbia Street  
23 Esplanade. These are the documents that we've all  
24 been sharing. I'm really thankful that we've had  
25 great and transparent process. Built in the mid-

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2 1990's as a result of this lease agreement, this  
3 esplanade remains a vital though anemic public  
4 amenity. These public assets were central to the  
5 rationale behind Planning Commission's approval in  
6 1993, and they continue to be central to mine. So,  
7 all I'm saying in this public hearing, and there are  
8 probably members that may-may have come in, but we're  
9 collecting testimony right now from our community. I  
10 don't imagine me approving this lease until we are  
11 all on the same page as we understand how we can  
12 continue to commit to that original purpose of public  
13 access not just for Valentino, but for the Columbia-  
14 the Columbia Street Esplanade. This an opportunity  
15 to come back to the community after we're done. We  
16 have a few more weeks before you will see an approval  
17 in front of you, and I hope that we can continue the  
18 spirit of collaboration and problem solving. That is  
19 my commitment to you. If we can all come together  
20 and-and come back to the community with the multiple  
21 faces, all the agencies, and say we have a good plan,  
22 I will feel comfortable approving this. Some of the  
23 things that I think we would want to see is a  
24 document that outlives as we are now looking at our  
25 old documents, outlives us. None of us I believe

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2 will be around—well, I don't know, ten years maybe is  
3 not too long ago. But I know I won't be a council  
4 member in ten years and so, therefore, we're going to  
5 need something ironclad, clear, transparent, and we  
6 can go back to the community and say this is our  
7 commitment, and there are other things we're going to  
8 have to talk about like planning for the future use  
9 of this spot, and whether that makes sense in the  
10 future. Let's start now ten years in advance not ten  
11 months in advance. And so, with that, I think the  
12 only questions I have are have—have you considered  
13 new investments for the park as we discussed and how  
14 we can bring a sense of equity to a \$50,000 initial  
15 allocation for maintenance of a park to 2018 numbers,  
16 and so maybe that's the first question the I'll ask.  
17 Like how are you thinking about that as—as we all  
18 kind of look at these things together? (background  
19 comments/door banging)

20 MATT DRURY: Sorry, Matt Drury, Parks  
21 Department. I think I would characterize that the  
22 Parks Department's sort of care and maintenance of  
23 the space has been quite considerable, sort of above  
24 and beyond, you know, the sort of initial  
25 conversations and commitments that came out of that

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2 Muhler (sp?) process starting in 1993. Having said  
3 that, I think we're always open to, you know, further  
4 conversations about the specific needs that the park  
5 may have. As you've notice, as you've noted, it's  
6 extremely popular, you know, well received by the-by  
7 the immediate community and also, you know, something  
8 of the destination at large. I will note it received  
9 allocations of capital improvements over the last  
10 several years totaling about \$600,000. So, for what  
11 it's worth, the agency feels, you know, has and will  
12 continue to invest in-in-in the pier and park as it-  
13 as the important resource that it is.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And what about  
15 the Columbia Street Esplanade?

16 MATT DRURY: That's currently under the-  
17 okay, I'll defer to my colleagues here.

18 MICHAEL CLARKE: Yeah, I mean right now  
19 under the lease agreement, and the lease agreement  
20 going forward the Esplanade is under our care, and  
21 we-we're responsible for the maintenance and upkeep  
22 of that. You know, we-if there is anything you're  
23 looking for improvements we can talk to you about it,  
24 but we-the upkeep is carried on our-on our shoulders.

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2 So, we—we definitely do that, and we're willing to  
3 work with you on—on how to improve that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, and I  
5 think the is a great time to kind of point to not  
6 just like taking care of a bench now because it's  
7 broken, but more about a long-term 10-year commitment  
8 that we can go back to the community and say this is—  
9 this is how we're going to work together. This is  
10 how we're going to see investment play out over ten  
11 years not just an initial moment. Where we have  
12 leverage right now as the City Council. So, I'm—I'm  
13 hoping that in the next few weeks we can kind of  
14 design something that makes sense, that's equitable  
15 but also can outlast an initial—an immediate  
16 conversation. This isn't about more bulb, daffodil  
17 bulbs in Valentino. This is about a long-term  
18 commitment that everybody signs and as we approve  
19 through public—this public process can be held  
20 accountable, and so—so I'm not just looking for  
21 immediate and we can—we can bring you some of those  
22 immediate items. This is about longevity of a  
23 document that will outlive us. Okay. What else?  
24 MOU. I believe that it's being constructed.

25 MICHAEL CLARKE: Yeah, I think it is.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Talk a little  
3 bit about that, and what we can expect soon.

4 MICHAEL CLARKE: Yeah, I think we're in  
5 the middle of drafting and negotiating. I don't know  
6 who has it at the moment.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Can you talk  
8 just in general what's an MOU for you in this case.  
9 What does it mean? What is it--what is it going to do  
10 for us?

11 MICHAEL CLARKE: Right. So, a memorandum  
12 of understanding is an agreement between two  
13 agencies. It's sort of like a contract where we, you  
14 know, agree, um, since there is joint efforts on the  
15 Valentino Pier just so we put on what we're  
16 responsible for and what the Parks Department is  
17 responsible for Parks Department is responsible for,  
18 and like we said, we're committed to keep the  
19 \$50,000, um, going forward. If there's anything else  
20 that needs to happen, you know, we'll talk to the  
21 Mayor's Office about how to--how to address those  
22 need, but then we would also describe the Parks  
23 Department's responsibilities with the money. Is  
24 that--?

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2 MATT DRURY: Yeah, yeah, and I think  
3 that. You summed it up quite well. (sic)

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, and maybe  
5 the final question. I know some of the members are  
6 here for—for their pieces. So, listening to me say  
7 very open and publicly that this—these might be the  
8 last ten years probably doesn't feel good necessarily  
9 because that means that we're going to have change a  
10 use and a facility that I think I said at the very  
11 beginning I know is integral into what and how the  
12 NYPD does what they do, and then I wanted to make  
13 sure you continue to do that, and because I care  
14 about the facility itself and what it means to the  
15 NYPD as a storage facility, I want to make sure that  
16 it has its longevity, which is insert planning. How  
17 would the NYPD take this now, and start the planning  
18 process today? What-what would it look like? Can  
19 you point to something that we can look at, and in a  
20 very similar way whether you have local community  
21 planning visioning that said hey, NYPD you're going  
22 to move out soon? Let's start talking about it, and  
23 have an open discussion about where you can go, plan  
24 it out in another neighborhood. Maybe it's in Red  
25 Hook, but somewhere else. How would you do that, and

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can you just give us a sense about how—how—how you'll  
take that?

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MICHAEL CLARKE: I mean I think it's hard  
to day exactly how we'd react or plan today for what  
we might need in ten years. You know, the—the city  
is changing every day. So, what spaces might be  
available in ten years we don't know today. So,  
it's, you know, it's—obviously it's an extensive  
process if we were to move this facility. We'd have  
to find somewhere, but I—I couldn't tell you today  
what we have to do to make that happen ten years from  
now.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Do you have a  
planning team at the NYPD like a group of planners?

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MICHAEL CLARKE: I believe so, yeah.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: You believe so.

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MICHAEL CLARKE: Yeah.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, let's talk  
to them and just organize a little bit because  
there's nothing stopping us now from saying, you  
know, what? We're done and we can now start planning  
if there's not a leg—I think more time is good.  
That's all I'm saying, and it sounds like you have a  
team that we can work with to start planning that out

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2 so everyone is good and happy and can anticipate  
3 change, and work together.

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MICHAEL CLARKE: Okay.

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6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, I think  
7 that's it for me, Chair. Thank you so much for—for  
8 the generous time.

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10 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, Council  
11 Member Menchaca, and just to echo my colleague's  
12 sentiments, and thank you very much for presenting  
13 that. My hope is that—that you will come to an  
14 agreeable stance when it comes to this particular  
15 property, and this area. I haven't seen Valentino  
16 Park, but I will. So, [laughs] I will—I will and our  
17 hope is that long-term that it really is shared and  
18 celebrated by this community that deserves it so very  
19 much, as you also deserve a storage space as well.  
20 So, we all support each other in our future endeavors  
21 to make sure that everybody is taken care of in this  
22 instance. So, thank you again for panel and thank,  
23 Council Member Menchaca. Thank you so much. Are  
24 there any more witnesses from the public that wish to  
25 testify on this particular item? Sir. [pause]  
Please step up.

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MALE SPEAKER: [off mic]

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2 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, not for this  
3 particular item. Okay, seeing none, I now close the  
4 public hearing on LU 175. I'd like to note that we  
5 have been joined by Council Members Treyger and  
6 Barron. Our next hearing is on LU 176, another  
7 application submitted by the New York City Police  
8 Department, and the Department of Citywide  
9 Administrative Services for the site selection and  
10 acquisition of property located at 241 West 26<sup>th</sup>  
11 Street, Block 776, Lot 12 to facilitate the  
12 conversion of an existing six-story 34,213 square  
13 foot building to house the headquarters of the NYPD  
14 Bomb Squad currently operating in the NYPD's Sixth  
15 Precinct at 233 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street. This property is  
16 located in the Speaker's District in Manhattan and I  
17 now invite the representatives of the NYPD to testify  
18 on this application. Counsel will swear you in at  
19 this time.

20 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please state your names.

21 LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: I am Lieutenant  
22 Mark Torrey of the NYPD Bomb Squad.

23 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
24 hand. Do you—do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
25 whole truth and nothing but the truth in your

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2 testimony before this Subcommittee and in response to  
3 all Council Member questions?

4 LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: I do.

5 MICHAEL CLARKE: [off mic] I'm Michael  
6 Clarke from NYPD Legal Bureau.

7 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you. You may  
8 begin.

9 LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: Good afternoon,  
10 Chair Adams and members of the Council. I am  
11 Lieutenant Mark Torrey, Commanding Officer of the  
12 NYPD Bomb Squad, and on behalf of Police Commissioner  
13 James P. O'Neill, I am pleased to testify before your  
14 committee to day on the relocation of the NYPD Bomb  
15 Squad's headquarters. The NYPD Bomb Squad is  
16 currently staffed by 39 uniformed members of the  
17 service, all of whom are Federally Certified  
18 Hazardous Device or colloquially speaking, Bomb  
19 Technicians. Fifteen of those have the additional  
20 designation of Explosive Detection Canine Handlers.  
21 The Bomb Squad's main responsibility is to  
22 investigate and mitigate suspicious packages,  
23 articles, devices and potentially explosive  
24 substances. In addition, we conduct security sweeps  
25 for visiting dignitaries in large public events. The

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2 Bomb Squad has been located in the Sixth Precinct  
3 since 1978. At that time, there were 12 uniformed  
4 assigned to the squad. Unfortunately, the increased  
5 threat levels including suspicious packages since the  
6 terrorist attacks of 9/11 have necessitated an  
7 increase in our headcount. Additionally, the  
8 equipment necessary to be-to-to continue operations  
9 as a state-of-the-art bomb squad has expanded in  
10 scope, complexity, and most importantly size of  
11 volume. Sadly, our space in Sixth Precinct has  
12 remained fixed. For our expensive equipment to be of  
13 maximum value it needs to be maintained in an  
14 enclosed climate controlled garage facility located  
15 on site. Currently, we are forced to park certain  
16 sensitive equipment outdoors exposing it to extremes  
17 to heat and cold, and leaving other equipment at a  
18 remote facility that adds previous minutes of times  
19 to our-to our response time. With no ability to  
20 expand our current location, we have been forced to  
21 seek new space. This has been a significant  
22 challenge since it's imperative that we remain in  
23 Manhattan where most of our suspicious package  
24 responses take place, and where there is the greatest  
25 concentration of potential target. From Times Square

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2 and—and [coughs] Excuse me—from the Times Square and  
3 the Empire State Building in Midtown, the World Trade  
4 Center and the New York Stock Exchange in Downtown,  
5 the Bomb Squad must be able to respond quickly to  
6 potential threats. Thus, remaining in close  
7 proximity to these high profile targets is vital.  
8 Space in Manhattan it can—that can accommodate our  
9 staff, our equipment and our kennels is limited, but  
10 we were fortunate to find a location on West 26<sup>th</sup>  
11 Street that is capable of meeting those needs. Now,  
12 I know there have been a few concerns about moving  
13 into this space, and I'd like to take a moment to  
14 address them. First and foremost, and I must  
15 underscore this: *We will never bring any potentially*  
16 *explosive device back to our base of operations on*  
17 *26<sup>th</sup> Street.* We will follow our long-standing  
18 practice of bringing any explosive not neutralized at  
19 the scene of an incident to Rodman's Neck where we  
20 can safely investigate a bomb, and perform what we  
21 call a render safe procedure on the device. This is  
22 the exact procedure that was followed during the  
23 Chelsea bombing of September 2016 you may recall.  
24 Moreover, we will not publicly mark our location or  
25 present at this location. Secondly, we are aware

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2 that residents are concerned with potential noise  
3 coming from the location. However, the Bomb Squad  
4 unlike a traditional police precinct has a limited  
5 number of emergency deployments in any given month  
6 significantly reducing any noise that our operations  
7 may cause. I'd like to note that my time of  
8 association with the Bomb Squad goes back to 1993,  
9 and we've never had any type of noise complaint  
10 generated by virtual Bomb Squad activities. In  
11 addition, we will continue to current-to follow our  
12 current protocol where sirens are not activated on an  
13 emergency response until we have cleared the block.  
14 Finally, we understand that there have been concerns  
15 raised about potential disruptions to the bike lane  
16 located on West 26<sup>th</sup> Street. This proposed location  
17 is on the north side of the street while the recently  
18 installed bike lane is on the south side of the  
19 street. Our vehicles should rally if ever crossing  
20 into the bike lane when entering or exiting our  
21 location. While it is unfortunate that we find  
22 ourselves in a time where a municipal police force is  
23 required to maintain technical experts, dogs, robots  
24 and equipment to safeguard our city and its  
25 inhabitants from a potentially explosive attack, it

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is nevertheless a necessity based on reality. We, therefore, ask for your support in enhancing our ability to most effectively respond to this critical threat. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My colleagues and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much, Lieutenant. Just for the record, can you just answer the amount of staffing or headcount in any day of officers at this location.

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LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: So, ma'am, on any given day the—the officers rotate in shifts, and we typically have anywhere from—depending on time of day, a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 8 to 12 that would be performing duty at that particular time, but average, really the average would be 5 or 6 at any given time of day.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: So, truly it is not the volume of personnel that would be at your typical precinct?

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LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: Yes, they're not all working at the same time. So, substantial—insignificant compared to a typical police precinct.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, thank you.

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LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: Yes, ma'am.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: In general, how many responses does the NYPD Bomb Squad make in a month or a year even?

LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: So, in-in terms of what we would call an emergency response, that's where a suspicious package has been located, identified, and our services are requested, that average is out to about 10 to 12 times a month. Now, our other duties, our additional duties they--they've actually--the amount of ones, if you will, generated where we take a responding number, if you will, that can be over a thousand. However, those responses one, exiting the building one time for instance to perform a security sweep think of the U.N. That's a high volume time of year. We might send a team out. They'll leave the building, perform five or even 10 security sweeps on the outside, and then come back. So one enter--one exiting, one entrance is responsible for ten runs. So, the--the amount of assignment numbers is not necessarily reflective of a response. In addition, we do have a remote facility. You're familiar with the police firing range in the Bronx. We've--we've handled those types of non-emergency

1  
2 situations often times a baseball games, sporting  
3 events, parades. Those are handled out of the Bronx  
4 location. It has nothing to do with our-our  
5 Manhattan location, but I think the-the key-the crux  
6 of your question is the emergency responses where  
7 we're-we're leaving that building and we're going out  
8 to a job. That's 10 or 12 times a month. [banging  
9 door]

10 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, thank you,  
11 Lieutenant. Lieutenant, in the event of an emergency  
12 call during late hours, how will quality of life  
13 issues be addressed for the residents of the area so  
14 not as to be disruptive as far as sirens and lights  
15 and such?

16 LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: So, I'll  
17 stipulate that-that block will not see any increase  
18 to emergency traffic noise, if you will, than they  
19 are seeing right now because right now we have  
20 ambulances and fire trucks and, of course, police  
21 vehicles that are traversing that block while they're  
22 on a way form Point A to B. Our footprint in that  
23 regard, ma'am, will-I'll stipulate that it will be  
24 non-existent because we do have a standing policy.  
25 We are currently located again on-in the Sixth

1  
2 Precinct. The garage exits onto Charles Street.  
3 When our vehicles leave, we're about mid-block. It's  
4 a--there are a lot of residents there, and I'm going  
5 to add that the residents really do love us. We have  
6 quite a good relationship with the community. There  
7 are ways to maintain that relationship, and one of  
8 them is when we have to exit the block on an  
9 emergency run, we--we just have a standing policy no  
10 sirens until you reach Hudson Street, and it's--it's--  
11 it's not a hard policy to follow. We just have to  
12 wait for the traffic light to change. Of course,  
13 lights are activated and that people will leave the  
14 block on just seeing the lights of a police truck  
15 behind the, but we have no need to--to activate a  
16 siren on the block. As soon as we hit 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and  
17 Hudson, that's when the siren is utilized, if  
18 necessary.

19 MICHAEL CLARKE:

20 Okay, I know the residents will be happy  
21 about that. On another line, I have a background  
22 with Community Board as being a chairperson of a  
23 community board for a number of years. There have  
24 been some concerns from the Community Board related  
25 to traffic along West 26<sup>th</sup> Street. So, my question

1  
2 is has the NYPD and/or DCAS addressed the concerns of  
3 the Community Board when it comes to traffic or the  
4 possibility of traffic increase because of this  
5 application?

6           LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: Yeah, we, you  
7 know, we—we—we currently think this will begin a  
8 traffic net reduction. You know, right now it's a  
9 255-person car garage that will become, you know,  
10 however often the Bomb Squad is going out, which is  
11 less than 200 cars going in and out. So, we didn't—  
12 you know, we—when we looked at the—the standard in  
13 the city environmental quality, we don't—it doesn't  
14 say we had to do a traffic study, but we did look at  
15 the issue, and we're considering it and we'll work  
16 with—do what we can to work with the community to  
17 minimize the disruption that any of this causes, but  
18 we think this actually will be a net reduction of  
19 traffic because, you know, our vehicles are going in  
20 and have attended 12 emergencies a month, and then  
21 the other things that happened, you know, it's not—  
22 it's not a—it's not like Fire Department that's  
23 coming out on multiple runs a day, our Police  
24 Department on multiple runs a day. That's not the  
25

1  
2 nature of the Bomb Squad's work. So, we think that  
3 will be actually a net reduction.

4 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, and I just have  
5 one last question before I go to my colleagues. With  
6 regard to the bike lane with the new bike lane that's  
7 been installed along West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, has—has an  
8 environmental analysis been revised to assess traffic  
9 conditions with this new addition as well?

10 MICHAEL CLARKE: I'm not—I'm not--  
11 [background comments] I'm not aware of that. I mean  
12 this is pretty—pretty new but, you know, we'll  
13 consider it as we go forward and we, again, want to  
14 be—the Bomb Squad prides itself on being good  
15 neighbors and we'll continue to be good neighbors.  
16 So, you know, I think the bike lane, you know, it—  
17 whatever it does to traffic, it doesn't change the  
18 fact that we're taking a 255-car garage and making it  
19 a much smaller amount of runs from our Bomb Squad.  
20 So, even with that, we still think it will be in that  
21 reduction.

22 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, our  
23 recommendation would be, of course, to make sure that  
24 that—that assessment is done to ensure the safety of  
25 the bikers using that bike lane.

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MICHAEL CLARKE: And we and because it's on the south side of the street, we don't anticipate that our—the cars will actually ever cross it.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Uh-huh.

MICHAEL CLARKE: So, in terms of biker safety, it shouldn't be—you know, our—our anticipation is that it won't be affecting the biker safety.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay. Alright, thank you. Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a couple of questions. The project site is presently occupied by a six-story building?

MICHAEL CLARKE: I believe so, something—something like that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, it indicates in the notes that are here that there's a parking facility that's presently there?

MICHAEL CLARKE: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And that your project calls for utilizing the first and second floor of the structure for parking?

1  
2           MICHAEL CLARKE: Right, but I think that  
3 would be parking our vehicles?

4           COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: For your—for your  
5 vehicles, right?

6           MICHAEL CLARKE: Right.

7           COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, you  
8 anticipate that that projected space will meet your  
9 needs. We don't want to have to come back another  
10 five years from now and see that there's a projected  
11 need now because of an increase. It will meet your  
12 needs as they currently exist, and your plans for the  
13 future five, ten years will be accommodated in this  
14 one space?

15          LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: Yes, ma'am.

16 This space represents a significant improvement is an  
17 understatement quite frankly. I cannot conceive of  
18 needing to move to an additional location after this.  
19 This is a monumental improvement for us.

20          COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And I'm always  
21 concerned about the residents, current residents of  
22 any project that we're talking about. So, do you  
23 have any information as to what their plans are or  
24 have they secured new quarters for their businesses?  
25 Because they will be displaced. So, do you have any

1  
2 information as to the status of this search for new  
3 headquarters for their businesses? [pause]

4 JASON ORTIZ: Good afternoon. My name is  
5 Jason Ortiz and I'm with DCAS.

6 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you. Counsel  
7 will swear you in.

8 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
9 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
10 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony  
11 before this Subcommittee, in answer to all the Sub-  
12 all Council Member questions?

13 JASON ORTIZ: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you. You may  
15 begin.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Alright, so the  
17 information that I have says that there's a fire  
18 prevention business, and the ground-a dry cleaners  
19 also are indicated as two of the businesses. Do you  
20 have any update as to what their status is?

21 JASON ORTIZ: The landlord owns the fire  
22 protection-prevention business.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

24 JASON ORTIZ: So, he will relocate that  
25 at his discretion.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Uh-huh.

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JASON ORTIZ: The dry cleaner has been offered the opportunity to relocate across the street at another landlord owned building. So, they are now working out the details on that move.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, thank you.

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Thank you, Madam Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, very much, Council Member Barron. Thank you very much panel for your testimony today. Are there any more members of the public who wish to testify with regard to this application? Alright, seeing none, I now close the public hearing on LU 176. Thank you very much.

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LIEUTENANT MARK TORREY: Thank you.

16

[background comments, pause]

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, the next two items we will be two individual landmarks located in Council Member Donovan Richards' district. The first of these is LU 152, the Landmarks Preservation Commission's designation of the Fire House for Engine Companies 264 and 328 and Ladder Company 134 located at 16-15 Central Avenue in Rockaway, Queens as a historic landmark. [pause] the second of these items is LU 153, the Landmark Preservation Commission

1  
2 designation of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Street Precinct Police  
3 Station located at 16-12 Mott Avenue in Far Rockaway,  
4 Queens as a historic landmark, and I now call on LPC  
5 to testify on both of these designations, and then we  
6 will take testimony from the public. Kate McHale,  
7 LPC, Ali Rasoulinejad, LPC. [pause] Okay and Stephen  
8 Rhinehardt from NYPD. Thank you. Okay. Counsel,  
9 please swear in the panel.

10 LEGAL COUNSEL: [pause] Please state  
11 your names.

12 STEVEN RHINEARD: Steven Rhineard (sp?)  
13 Architect with NYPD.

14 MICHAEL CLARKE: Mike Clarke, agency  
15 attorney at NYPD.

16 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Kate Lemos McHale,  
17 Landmarks Preservation Commission.

18 ALI RASOULINEJAD: Ali Rasoulinejad, LPC.

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

24 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: I do.  
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ALI RASOULINEJAD: Yes.

MICHAEL CLARKE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, thank you. You  
may begin.

KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Good afternoon, Chair  
Adams and Subcommittee members. I'm Kate Lemos  
McHale, Director of Research at LPC. I'm joined by  
Ali Rasoulinejad to present these two designations.  
On May 29, 2018, the Landmarks Preservation  
Commission designated Engine Company 236 and 328 Hook  
and Ladder 134 Fire House and the 53<sup>rd</sup> now 101<sup>st</sup>  
Precinct Police Station in Downtown Far Rockaway as  
individual landmarks. I have a little background on  
both, which I'll just present to you now, and then  
we'll get into the police precinct.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Kate, can you speak  
more directly into microphone, please,

KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Oh, yes, there you  
go.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: We're having a hard  
time hearing you.

KATE LEMOS MCHALE: At the public hearing  
on April 24<sup>th</sup> two people testified in favor of the  
designation of these buildings including

1  
2 representatives of Council Member Donovan Richards  
3 and the Historic Districts Council. The Fire  
4 Department supported designation, and the Police  
5 Department did not oppose designation. These  
6 properties were identified as historic preservation  
7 opportunities within a proposed rezoning of the  
8 Downtown Rockaway area shown in the dashed outline on  
9 your screen with the Downtown Far Rockaway  
10 redevelopment project led by EDC, which has among its  
11 goals improvement to public space, strengthening  
12 existing commercial corridors and expanding community  
13 services and cultural assets. Far Rockaway is the  
14 eastern most community in New York City on the  
15 Rockaway Peninsula bordering Nassau County. Although  
16 its history as seaside resort reaches back to the  
17 1830s, it began in earnest with the arrival of the  
18 railroad in 1869, which led to the further  
19 construction of summer hotels and boarding houses.  
20 In 1880, a railroad trestle constructed across  
21 Jamaica Bay linked the Rockaways directly with Queens  
22 leaving many residents to build their own summer  
23 cottages there. After this line was electrified in  
24 the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, some of these residents  
25 decided to stay in Far Rockaway year round and

1  
2 commute to their jobs from there. Far Rockaway along  
3 with the rest of present day along with the rest of  
4 present day Queens became part of New York City in  
5 1898. The construction of the new civic buildings  
6 there in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century coincided with a boom  
7 in its year-round population, and cemented its  
8 connection to the rest of the city. Far Rockaway  
9 remains a quiet, largely low-rise community, and  
10 these buildings are both significant reminders of a  
11 crucial era, and its development history and  
12 prominent historic structures on the street scape.  
13 The Engine Companies 264 and 328, Ladder Company 134  
14 Firehouse is a three-story firehouse constructed in  
15 1910 to 12 to address a paucity the fire protection  
16 for the growing community of Far Rockaway. Designed  
17 by architectural firm Hoppin and Kone well known  
18 designers of firehouses and police stations in New  
19 York City. The building is located on Central Avenue  
20 north of Mott Avenue. It sits at the northern end of  
21 a large rectangular lot that includes a one-story  
22 public library built in the 1960s at the south end  
23 and parking lot in the center. The landmark site is  
24 shown here and includes just the firehouse itself.  
25 [pause] The firehouse's Renaissance Revival style

1  
2 façade is a three-bay version of a standardized  
3 modular design devised by Hoppin and Kone that was  
4 used at 18 locations in either one, two or three-day  
5 iterations. Engine Company 264 as shown on the  
6 right, was the one of only three built in the larger  
7 three-bay wide façade, and these are some models that  
8 were found at the Public Design Commission when they  
9 were approved. This was the first construction  
10 campaign by the Fire Department that used a  
11 standardized façade design that could be customized  
12 to fit particular sites. According to the Brooklyn  
13 Eagle at the time, the greatest celebration in the  
14 history of the Rockaways was held at the opening of  
15 this firehouse in 1913. That celebration is shown on  
16 the left, and the right is the firehouse in the  
17 1960s. The building features Renaissance inspired  
18 detailing, such as its rusticated base, paired double  
19 height pile clusters, the cast iron alarm bell with  
20 the seal of the Fire Department and a stone cornice.  
21 In the Far Rockaway community, the firehouse is  
22 affectionately know as the Big House. It serves as a  
23 reminder of the period of growth and promise in the  
24 years after consolidation of New York City. The 53<sup>rd</sup>  
25 now 101<sup>st</sup> Precinct Police Station is an impressive

1  
2 civic structure in the Rockaways. Completed by early  
3 1929, this building replaced the neighborhood's  
4 dilapidated former precinct house with a dignified  
5 stately structure reflecting its importance—important  
6 community role in the prosperity of the city that  
7 constructed it. It was the first police station  
8 built by the city of New York in the Rockaways. The  
9 53<sup>rd</sup> Precinct Police Station was built as part of a  
10 program initiated by Commissioner Richard E. Enright  
11 to modernize, motorize and stabilize the department.  
12 It was designed by Thomas C. O'Brien who had the  
13 Parks Department as a patrolman in 1890 and became  
14 the Superintendent of Buildings in 1923. As the head  
15 architect, O'Brien designed several new police  
16 stations as part of Commissioner Enright's building  
17 campaign. The 53<sup>rd</sup> Precinct Police Station is  
18 located four blocks east of the Far Rockaway Train  
19 Station at the corner of Mott Avenue and Scott A.  
20 Gadell Place. The three-story building has two fully  
21 developed facades and recalls an Italian Renaissance  
22 Palazzo featuring a rusticated ground story with  
23 round arch openings crowned by stepped arches,  
24 classical window surrounds, coining and a deep molded  
25 cornice. A 2-story garage adjoining the station

1  
2 house reflects the increasing importance of motor  
3 vehicles to patrol in the 1920s. Little change from  
4 the time of its opening the 53<sup>rd</sup> now 101<sup>st</sup> Precinct  
5 Police Station remains one of Far Rockaway's most  
6 prominent buildings as well as a significant link to  
7 a crucial period in the neighborhood's development  
8 with new civic, educational, transportation and  
9 recreational facilities heralded Far Rockaway's  
10 emergence as a year-round community and cemented its  
11 connection to New York City. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much.  
13 My question and Council Member Richards' question as  
14 well has to do with the ADA accessibility issue with  
15 Police Precinct. Can you please address that?

16 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Sure. Yes, we had  
17 some conversations with the Parks Department Leading  
18 up to this designation to talk about what it would to  
19 be a landmark and any projects that they have. We  
20 understand that they are committed to construct an  
21 ADA ramp at this property, and they are in the  
22 process of onboarding consultants to do that, and we  
23 plan to meet with them within the month to discuss  
24 their plans.

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ALI RASOULINEJAD: Yeah, as soon as we have our consultant on board we'll meet with LPC to make sure that the plans, you know, meet their requirements so we can get it done.

6

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, and you said that was going to be within a month? You're going to work with the consultant?

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ALI RASOULINEJAD: Well, we're hoping to have our consultant on board within the month, and then we want our consultant to be at that meeting. So, you know, obviously he or she can hear what LPC has to say, and we expect that to be in the month—and we—sure as soon as they're on board we'll set up a meeting, but it should be—I mean not the end of August but 30 or so days.

17

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay.

18

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ALI RASOULINEJAD: That's—that's our hope.

20

21

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, that—that was the question that was hanging in the air. Thank you. Council Member Barron, did you have any questions?

23

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes. Thank you. So, how would you meet the requirements for ADA and not violate the requirements of landmark status,

1  
2 which I believe says you keep the façade as is. How  
3 do you plan to address that issue?

4 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: The Landmarks  
5 Commission regularly approves ramps and—and different  
6 means of making historic buildings accessible. [door  
7 bangs] So there are ways of designing something that  
8 works with the existing architecture that could be  
9 symmetrical and that doesn't impact historic fabrics.  
10 So, here it's in a central entrance location on the  
11 primary façade. So we would look at ways to minimize  
12 and impact to the stone base and to the area where it  
13 would interact with the—the façade.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, in addition—  
15 that's interesting. Thank you and I'm glad to know  
16 that you have that accommodation. In addition to ADA  
17 modifications, what other modifications does  
18 Landmarks approve?

19 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Well, we look at any  
20 proposed changes that owners need to make to their  
21 buildings. So, whether it's window replacement of  
22 changes for--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] For  
24 window or what else? I didn't under—I didn't hear  
25 you. You said window replacement.

1  
2 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Sorry, window  
3 replacement, door replacement, repair, you know, this  
4 an overhanging cornice if there is any work on that,  
5 mechanical equipment, et cetera.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, thank you.  
7 Thank you, Madam Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, Council  
9 Member Barron. Thank you, very much, panel. Are  
10 there any members of the public who wish to testify  
11 on any of these items? Seeing none, I now close the  
12 public hearings on LU 152 and 153. Thank you very  
13 much.

14 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: The last item on  
16 today's agenda is LU 151. The Landmarks Preservation  
17 Commission's designation of the Central Harlem West  
18 130<sup>th</sup> through 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets Historic District. The  
19 historic district consists of approximately 164  
20 properties primarily row houses located on West  
21 130<sup>th</sup>, West 131<sup>st</sup> and West 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets between Lenox  
22 and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenues. This historic district is in  
23 Council Member Perkins' district. Representatives of  
24 the Landmarks Preservation Commission will testify on  
25 this item followed by testimony by the public, and I

1  
2 now open public hearings on LU 5-154. Okay, the  
3 panel is still in place. You may begin. 151. I'm  
4 sorry.

5 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: 151. Okay. On May  
6 29, 2108 the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted  
7 unanimously to approve the designation of the Central  
8 Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> to 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets Historic District.  
9 Constructed in during the speculative building boom  
10 that created Central Harlem's row house neighborhoods  
11 in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the district is highly  
12 intact and reflects both the architectural  
13 development of Harlem, and also the rich social,  
14 cultural and political life of Harlem's African-  
15 American community in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Historic  
16 District consists consist of approximately 164  
17 buildings stretching from West 130<sup>th</sup> to West 132<sup>nd</sup>  
18 Street between Lenox and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. As I will  
19 discuss, the boundaries were drawn to include the  
20 most cohesive mid-block streetscapes. I will take  
21 you through the architectural analysis support the  
22 designation of this district followed by a summary  
23 that's of incredible significance. Much of Harlem  
24 above 125<sup>th</sup> Street experienced rapid development in  
25 the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as

1  
2 transportation and infrastructure improvements made  
3 it an attractive neighborhood for New Yorkers looking  
4 to escape the over-crowding of Lower Manhattan.  
5 Speculative builders and architects filed the nearly  
6 empty blocks seen here in 1879 on the left, and in  
7 just over a decade nearly all of the buildings  
8 contained within the proposed district had been  
9 built. Today, the district contains almost  
10 exclusively 19<sup>th</sup> Century architecture with only 12  
11 new buildings all built since 2000. These 12  
12 buildings along with 4 unimproved lots and a  
13 community garden are the only non-contributing  
14 properties within the district. The nearly 150  
15 contributing buildings within the district have  
16 consistency in building age and development history,  
17 and also have a high level of integrity or  
18 intactness. As you can see here by the buildings  
19 coded in green, which are those that are intact with  
20 yellow in the map being moderately altered, and by  
21 moderately altered we mean the removal or alteration  
22 to a significant feature of the façade like a cornice or  
23 a stoop being removed. The area's few buildings,  
24 which were not part of the historical significance of  
25 the district are generally of a scale and character

1 that is compatible with the historic architecture.  
2 They are considered non-contributing as are the four  
3 vacant lots and a community garden. All of these  
4 lots are located within the mid-block and could  
5 easily be carved out of the district. Most are  
6 single width lots, and in these locations the  
7 commission would be able to ensure that new  
8 development is contextually designed and maintain a  
9 sense of place along the mid-blocks. Overall, the  
10 district's streetscapes are a cohesive collection of  
11 late 19<sup>th</sup> Century row house architectural styles  
12 including rows of neo-Grec, Queen Anne, Revival style  
13 buildings all in a consistent pallet of brick and  
14 brown stone. When the building styles are mapped, as  
15 seen here, the predominance of the Neo-Grec style,  
16 which is shown in yellow becomes clear with clusters  
17 of Renaissance Revival and Queen Anne style buildings  
18 in there first. (sic) Looking at building typology,  
19 the district is predominantly residential consisting  
20 mostly of row houses with some apartment buildings,  
21 one with a commercial ground floor on West 132<sup>nd</sup>  
22 Street, a former stable and churches. At the  
23 Landmarks Commission's public hearing on April 17<sup>th</sup>,  
24 owners of this former stable building, which is now  
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1  
2 operated as a garage, opposed its inclusion within  
3 the district. Commission staff met with these owners  
4 on two occasions to hear their concerns and discuss  
5 what designation would mean for them. In response to  
6 public testimony, the Commission heard additional  
7 analysis of this building, which informed its vote to  
8 include it within the district, and I wanted to share  
9 that analysis with you briefly. Originally  
10 constructed in 1889 as a stable, the structure was  
11 built during the primary period of development of the  
12 district. It was designed by Julius F. Munckwitz who  
13 worked in the office of Calvert Vaux, and later  
14 served as architect to the Parks Commission where he  
15 was involved in designs for Central Park and  
16 Morningside Park. This building was converted to a  
17 garage by 1914, and was expanded to include its three  
18 eastern most bays, which blend seamlessly with the  
19 original 1889 design—1889. Why the façade had been  
20 painted blacking masking the color and texture of the  
21 original brick this is reversible, and it is  
22 otherwise very intact. The boundaries of the district  
23 were drawn to encompass the 19<sup>th</sup> Century development  
24 of Central Harlem and include all buildings that face  
25 the mid-block. Only vacant lots along the edges of

1  
2 the district and buildings that communicate directly  
3 with the avenues were omitted. This 1889 building,  
4 which is show here on the left, completes the  
5 streetscape of West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street, which because of  
6 the presence of apartment buildings as well as row  
7 houses, is somewhat more varied in height and scale  
8 than the blocks to the south. The building retains a  
9 high level of integrity and contributes to the  
10 historic character of the district in terms of its  
11 age, materials and design. As the block develops in  
12 the 1880s and 1890s, builders and developers started  
13 to move away from row houses and instead erected  
14 tenements and service buildings. The simultaneous  
15 construction of the stable was before Queen Anne  
16 style brick tenements just two buildings down  
17 illustrates this change in context. Now I would like  
18 to talk about the district's very rich cultural  
19 history, which relates 100 years of African-American  
20 history including significant movements from the  
21 Harlem Renaissance to the Civil Rights Movement.  
22 While the first residents of these row houses were  
23 predominantly white and middle-class, after the turn  
24 of the century, New York City's African-American  
25 population increased, and many began to rent and

1 purchase homes in Harlem and within the district.  
2  
3 These row houses were often adapted for other uses,  
4 and within the district a number of buildings have  
5 significant ties to cultural uses that benefit  
6 societies and cooperatives of the 1920s and '30s and  
7 to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. As  
8 illustrated in this 1933 map, the area of the  
9 Historic District reflected that layering of social,  
10 cultural and artistic uses particularly pertaining to  
11 music, dance and theater that were densely integrated  
12 into this residential neighborhood. Composer Scott  
13 Joplin achieved fame for his unique ragtime  
14 compositions and was dubbed the King of Ragtime. At  
15 the time of his death he resided at 163 West 131<sup>st</sup>  
16 Street in the district. The New Amsterdam Musical  
17 Association or NAMA, which is located on West 130<sup>th</sup>  
18 Street, is the oldest African-American musical  
19 association in the United States. It was founded in  
20 1904 in response to African-American musicians being  
21 denied admission into White only local unions. NAMA  
22 purchased 107 West 130<sup>th</sup> Street in 1922, and the  
23 build-building continues to serve as the  
24 organization's headquarters. NAMA has had many  
25 important composers and musicians among it's members.

1  
2 James Herbert Eubie Blake for example was a  
3 longstanding member, and for a time resided at NAMA's  
4 headquarters. Eubie Blake was one of the more  
5 important figures in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century African-  
6 American music in particular ragtime and early jazz  
7 music and culture, and was awarded the Presidential  
8 Medal of Freedom in 1981. Theater production was an  
9 important part of the culture of Harlem. Due to the  
10 proximity of the Lafayette Theater, many African-  
11 American actors, actresses, theater musicians lived  
12 throughout the proposed-throughout the districts, and  
13 were particularly concentrated on West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street.  
14 Workers, performers, philanthropists, and profess-  
15 professionals organized to meet the needs of the  
16 community that faced constant de facto segregation,  
17 and was strictly excluded from the professional,  
18 cultural, political and social white only groups in  
19 Manhattan. In Central Harlem mutual aid societies,  
20 fraternal organizations and cooperatives provided  
21 direct services to their members and served as  
22 networking and support systems for African-American  
23 doctors, lawyers, actors, politicians, and business  
24 owners. These societies provided the networks and  
25 structure that were key to galvanizing the community

1  
2 for more overt political work of the boycotts,  
3 rallies and marches of the '50s and '60s and set the  
4 stage for the Civil Rights Movement. This historic  
5 district has strong ties to that movement and to the  
6 March on Washington in particular. Churches and  
7 religious leadership play an integral role in the  
8 Civil Rights Movement. Within the district,  
9 Friendship Baptist Church on 131<sup>st</sup> Street was  
10 actively involved in mobilizing its membership to  
11 support the fight for civil rights. Church  
12 leadership had a close relationship with Reverend  
13 Martin Luther King, Jr. who gave a sermon here in  
14 1955, and the church was used as a base for  
15 organizing and galvanizing support for the March on  
16 Washington and other events. Under the leadership of  
17 former Pastor Dr. Thomas Kilgard, Jr. shown on the  
18 right, and in the center next to Reverent Martin  
19 Luther King, Jr. the church owned and operated the  
20 Friendship House at 170 West 130<sup>th</sup> Street, which  
21 housed educational, recreational, and cultural  
22 centers and later the headquarter for the March on  
23 Washington. In 1963, 170 West 130<sup>th</sup> Street was used  
24 as the national headquarters for the March on  
25 Washington. Bayard Rustin pictured here who was

1  
2 award the Presidential Medal of Freedom, by [man  
3 yelling in background] by President Obama was the  
4 chief organizer, and from this building organized the  
5 march, which remains the nation's largest political  
6 demonstration and has immeasurable national  
7 significance. Earlier in its history the building  
8 housed the Utopian Neighborhood Club and Utopia  
9 Children's House, Citizen Community institutions, and  
10 the architect of its façade, Vertner Tandy, was the  
11 first African-American architect registered in New  
12 York State. This district was among priorities for  
13 designation presented to LPC by Community Board 10  
14 and Save Harlem now. After considerable owner  
15 outreach including three public owner meetings in  
16 Harlem, and individual property owner meetings at our  
17 offices, LPC received widespread support for the  
18 district. At our public hearing on April 17<sup>th</sup> and in  
19 written testimony, the Commission received support  
20 from 28 organizations and individuals including  
21 representatives of the Office of New York State  
22 Senator Brian Benjamin, New York State Assemblywoman  
23 Inez Dickens, the Office of Manhattan Borough  
24 President Gale Brewer, Manhattan Community Board 10,  
25 the New York City Landmarks Conservancy, the Real

1  
2 Estate Board of New York, Historic Districts Council,  
3 an the Municipal Art Society of New York, Society for  
4 the Architecture of the city, Landmark West, Save  
5 Harlem Now, Ascendant Neighborhood Development, the  
6 West 131<sup>st</sup> Street, and the West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Block  
7 Associations, Mount Morris Park Community Improvement  
8 Association, New Amsterdam Musical Association, local  
9 property owners and local residents. As I mentioned,  
10 LPC heard some testimony at our public hearing  
11 requesting that the boundaries be changed to remove  
12 the former stable from the district, and also  
13 received a petition with over 450 signature asking  
14 the Commission to keep the boundaries as proposed  
15 including the former stable. The Landmarks  
16 Commission voted unanimously to designate the  
17 Historic District based on its architectural  
18 significance and the incredible—incredibly  
19 significant cultural history it embodies and to  
20 retain the original boundaries including he garage.  
21 We are very please to bring this designation before  
22 you today. In the interest of time, I only  
23 highlighted a few of the cultural significant  
24 buildings in the district, and I urge you to Story  
25 Map that LPC released in conjunction with the

1  
2 designation to read about all the others. Thank you  
3 and I am happy to take your questions.

4           CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much,  
5 and I would like to thank the LPC for your thoughtful  
6 consideration of this—of this designation, and for  
7 that extensive history lesson that you just provided  
8 to us today. [laughs] It is appreciated and, um,  
9 you know, as an African-American I can certainly  
10 appreciate all of the deep history that is held in  
11 this particular historic district, and it is  
12 absolutely a pleasure to consider this designation  
13 before us today. Council Member Barron, did you have  
14 questions?

15           COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes, thank you,  
16 Madam Chair, and just want to make note, I want to  
17 give credit to my predecessor former Council Member  
18 Charles Barron who insisted that the Landmarks  
19 Commission in all of their presentations find what  
20 contributions and significance areas had to—and the  
21 African-American and to the development of the city  
22 at large, and make sure to include that. So, I want  
23 to give that recognition and commend you for the  
24 presentation you've done. I just have a couple of  
25 questions. We talked—in part of your testimony I

1  
2 heard you indicate that you carved out those  
3 buildings that were significantly changed from the  
4 original design. Did you show in your drawings that  
5 some of those are—were in yellow or some color?

6 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: We didn't—we didn't  
7 actually carve those out. We did note that there  
8 were some alterations, but overall we—the area is  
9 very much intact. There are a few new buildings,  
10 which we noted, but those really maintain a similar  
11 scale and use of similar materials, so they don't  
12 detract from the overall character.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, are there any  
14 new constructions within the boundaries that you  
15 propose?

16 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Yes, and they are  
17 these. Sorry, I'll just go back really quickly. I  
18 did show, you know—I show here. So, on this side we  
19 show the new buildings look like the one that you see  
20 in the middle of this slide.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. So, they're  
22 new. They're not in context, but they are included  
23 in the boundaries?

24 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: They're included in  
25 the boundaries. They—they aren't really thought of

1  
2 as intrusions the way we would with new construction  
3 that's out of scale, but since they are of a similar  
4 material and scale, you know, they—they work with the  
5 street scape.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. So, then my  
7 question comes to the garage and former stable that  
8 you had in your presentation where the owner  
9 requested a carve-out. What is involved in agreeing  
10 to have a carve-out and what consideration was given  
11 to that property?

12 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Let me just find  
13 those maps that shows it. So, the—the--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] I'm  
15 always concerned that the city doesn't, you know,  
16 overlook the individual, the small person. You know,  
17 the person who has some concerns and address the  
18 issue satisfactorily. So, what consideration was  
19 given? What would be required to designate it or to  
20 take it out of the designated area?

21 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: It's located at the  
22 western edge of 132<sup>nd</sup> Street--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
24 Okay.

1  
2 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: --which you can see  
3 here in orang-

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
5 Right.

6 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: --at that top. Yeah.  
7 So, what would be required is acknowledge--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
9 Well, it's the orange rectangle in the upper left?

10 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: That's right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

12 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Yes, but we analyzed--  
13 I mean we met with the owners on a different--two  
14 different occasions and had extensive conversations  
15 about their concerns, and talked about what it means  
16 to be in a district, what type of changes may be  
17 permissible for the building. Being in a historic  
18 district doesn't mean that you can't do anything to  
19 your building. It means that the Commission would  
20 have to review and approve proposed changes, which  
21 may be able to include an expansion of the building  
22 or--but in this case, we did additional research  
23 really to analyze its place within the streetscape,  
24 its place within the history of the district, it's  
25 architectural design and materials, which relate to

1  
2 the rest of the historic buildings in the district,  
3 and the then the Commission found that it was  
4 contributing and voted to keep it in the district.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Madam  
6 Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, Council  
8 Member Barron. I also will echo concerns of my  
9 colleague and—and you know this, for this particular  
10 parking garage, the former stable, I would like to  
11 hear all sides, if there—all sides relevant to this  
12 particular property that is now attached to this  
13 designation. So, I for the record am reserving any  
14 feeling or—or anything. I want to hear all sides  
15 because I know that there are some that want it, and  
16 there are some that don't want it. So, I am ready  
17 and excited to hear both sides of this story for  
18 inclusion or not inclusion or leaving in or carving  
19 out this particular property. So, thank you very  
20 much, panel.

21 KATE LEMOS MCHALE: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay. I'll go back  
23 to our [pause] Okay, I am told that we do have  
24 members of the public who wish to testify on this  
25 item. So, I'd like to call up Jordan Press, Jeff—is

1  
2 it Boroughs and Jason Jackson. You will have two  
3 minutes on the clock. We've got a few panels coming  
4 up today. So, in the interest of time, you will be  
5 time limited for your testimony. [pause] Okay, I'm  
6 going to ask Counsel to swear you in at this time.

7 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please state your names.

8 JEFF BOROUGHES: Jeff Boroughs.

9 JORDAN PRESS: Jordan Press.

10 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
11 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
12 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony  
13 before this Subcommittee, and in answer to all sub--  
14 Council Member questions?

15 JORDAN PRESS: Yes.

16 JEFF BOROUGHES: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much  
18 for being here today. You may begin. [pause]

19 BENTLEY MEEKER: Sure. There we go.  
20 Thank you. I own a sound company, too. I should  
21 know this. Thank you Council Members for the  
22 opportunity to speak today. My name is Bentley  
23 Meeker, and I own the garage in question at 161 West  
24 132<sup>nd</sup> Street, the very northwest edge of the Central  
25 Harlem Historic District. I'm here to request that

1  
2 the City Council exclude my building from the  
3 Historic District and the reason why I'll come out  
4 with a little later. I'm a longstanding East Harlem  
5 resident. I was a West Harlem resident for a long  
6 time. I've been involved with the community in  
7 Harlem for over a decade. I collaborated with  
8 Community Board 9, the Department of Transportation,  
9 the 125<sup>th</sup> Street BID and the West Harlem Arts Fund to  
10 create a large scale public art installation on 125<sup>th</sup>  
11 Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue-12<sup>th</sup> Avenue called the H in  
12 Harlem. I love Harlem. I've chosen it as my  
13 residence because I really believe that it is the  
14 most vibrant and vital part of New York. It's where  
15 I raised my son, and it's where I wanted to-I wanted  
16 him to-to be a part of this community for my entire  
17 life in New York. I do applaud the LPC for  
18 designating the Central Harlem Historic District  
19 whose special architecture and cultural history are a  
20 remarkable reminder of the powerful role that  
21 African-American Community of Harlem played in  
22 creating political, social, and cultural change both  
23 in New York City and indeed the nation as a whole,  
24 but my garage is clearly distinctive for the  
25 residential row house buildings that characterize

1  
2 this district. My garage is located right across the  
3 street from the new construction building that was  
4 not included in the district, and the decision by the  
5 LPC to leave the properties along Adam Clayton Powell  
6 and Atlantic Avenues out of the proposed district was  
7 purposeful and begs the question why were those  
8 commercial properties excluded, yet this commercial  
9 property designated. The special sense of place that  
10 the LPC is creating with this district will be just  
11 as intact if my property were not a part of it. My  
12 building is different from the vast majority of the  
13 buildings in the district in both typology [bell] and  
14 use. My parking garage is the only commercial  
15 building in the district, and it was built-- Am I  
16 running out of time here? [laughs] Sorry guys, and  
17 it was built as a stable, but it was converted into  
18 an auto garage. The, um, the building has been  
19 altered at the base and the entire façade is obscured  
20 by heavy black paint, which was noted earlier.  
21 Further more, it's been damaged by decades of  
22 automobile exhaust and road salt, which damages the  
23 asphalt and rebar floor structures. The wood farming  
24 of this building makes it impossible to repurpose and  
25 eternally preserving a wood framed parking garage

1  
2 simply doesn't make any sense either on an economic  
3 or on a social level. I have no immediate plans to  
4 re-develop the building, but we were before City  
5 Planning to explore possibilities when the historic  
6 district was proposed and city Planning ceased all  
7 planning with us until this resolved. It's patently  
8 unfair for the city to preclude from options with the  
9 property in the future by landmarking this non-  
10 descript parking garage, and it doesn't make any  
11 sense to keep a dirt-a parking garage frozen in amber  
12 forever. I understand the Landmarks Preservation  
13 Commission does not regulate use, but designating my  
14 property is in effect relegating my property to  
15 remain a garage in perpetuity. So, like I said, I  
16 have to short. Anyways, I just wanted to—I  
17 appreciate the opportunity to testify before you guy.  
18 I really believe that this is—this—this building has  
19 a lot of merit outside of the—outside of the Historic  
20 District, and makes a lot of sense for the city to  
21 keep out.

22 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you. Mr.  
23 Meeker. I guess my—my question for you is just to  
24 get a little bit of an understanding with regard to  
25 this garage. You stated that you had no immediate

1  
2 plans to redevelop the building, but were exploring  
3 possibilities when this was proposed, when this  
4 historic district was proposed. What exactly are  
5 your intentions, if any, for this property?

6           BENTLEY MEEKER: Well, so the reason why  
7 I got Jason and Jeff with me is because we are in  
8 discussions right now. So, one of the things that we  
9 were talking about doing was putting a residential  
10 property up, and then have the bottom space be a  
11 community facility. The community facility would be  
12 more-because I'm in the arts and because I came up  
13 through the arts, I want to do an arts based facility  
14 there. So, I've got Jason, I've got Jeff. I also  
15 have a friend of mine who's a cultural curator over  
16 at the metropolitan Museum of Art who programs a lot  
17 of their sort of live performance type stuff, and we  
18 were going to put a—we're talking in deep discussions  
19 about putting a community-based facility there. We  
20 wanted to do the St. Nick's Pub, but [laughs]  
21 unfortunately, that's not something that we could  
22 now, but we were knee deep in discussions. Jason and  
23 I were knee deep in discussions with them. We  
24 thought it was a little bit small, and that's where  
25 the whole discussion of the parking garage came in

1  
2 because Saint Nick's was a, you know, certainly  
3 culturally significant, but when we went in there and  
4 actually looked at the space it was very, very small  
5 and very difficult to manage in terms of ADA  
6 compliance and in terms of zoning and—and regulatory  
7 aspects of it, but, um, because, you know, it had  
8 been closed for a long, long time but it was—it was a  
9 great idea. I loved that idea. I wanted to have  
10 that idea take a life, and so we—we decided that  
11 maybe this would be something that we would use in a  
12 development on 132<sup>nd</sup> Street.

13 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, that's—that's  
14 reasonable. There seems to be no real prohibition of  
15 change in this building if it'—if it's included in  
16 this designation, though. How—in—in your—your view  
17 of perhaps changing it, how tall of a building, how  
18 big of a space are you—were you thinking of?

19 BENTLEY MEEKER: Um, so, I—I—again, we  
20 were in the feas—in the feasibility process. I don't  
21 think that zoning allows us to go very high in that  
22 neighborhood. I do think that repurposing the  
23 existing building is something that's impossible.  
24 First of all, there are light and air requirements  
25 that it's in violation of. So, I mean any residence

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that I would do, would force me to-to-to be compliant with light and air. That would mean that I would have to chop the last 35 feet of the building off, but the building is made of way. There's now way that the building would--the structure itself would actually withstand that. So, if we were going to do anything--anything other than to turn this thing into a parking garage we would have to take this thing apart, and we'd have to put it back--we'd have put a new property in its place [pause] and that's why we want to take it out because I can't--it would lose money every month as a parking garage, and it doesn't make any sense for this thing to be a parking garage forever--

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Uh-huh.

BENTLEY MEEKER: --especially given self-driving cars are coming out now and dah-dah-dah, you know--

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: [interposing] So, it would be--

BENTLEY MEEKER: [interposing] So, the world for parking I'm noticing it actually in the way that we're, you know, in our transient activity.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: So, I guess it's safe  
for us to--to not assume, but pretty much to  
understand the fact that regardless you do plan to  
change this building, this property into something  
other than a garage?

7

BENTLEY MEEKER: I mean we--we would have  
to. We have to, you know. It's--

9

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, and as--as far  
as changing the structure to perhaps housing, would  
you guarantee that this would be affordable housing  
for the residents?

13

BENTLEY MEEKER: Absolutely, affordable--  
so affordable housing was a big component of what we  
were looking at when we were doing this whole  
feasibility study. Again, we don't know what we're  
able to do and what we're not able to do because we  
haven't completed the feasibility, and the city--and  
the City Planning won't walk to us until we--until we  
have a, you know, until we have all the clear, but  
absolutely affordable housing. You know, it's  
certainly a component of potentially completely  
affordable housing was something that we were looking  
at, and something we're very earnestly pursuing.

25

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, I'm going to  
turn it to my colleague for questions at this time.

3

4

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Madam  
Chair. Thank you for coming before this committee.

5

6

BENTLEY MEEKER: Thank you.

7

8

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And if, in fact,  
your property remains in the boundaries that have  
been proposed, my understanding through City Planning  
is that you could not make major changes to the  
façade, but what you can do on the interior is not  
impacted. I think that's--

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BENTLEY MEEKER: Understood. The--the  
nature of the construction of the building itself is  
such that the interior, it's--it's basically a wood--  
it's a wood framed building. So, if we were going to  
take that building and covert it, build on top of it,  
if we were going, you know, if we were going to turn  
it into any kind of a residence or any kind of a  
commercial facility, the structure itself just  
wouldn't--we just couldn't--we couldn't do it. We just  
can do it. I mean I've had architects look at this  
thing. I've had--I've had zoning people look at this  
thing and we've--we've done some, we've done some real  
home work on this, and--

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2

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, it's a garage

3

now?

4

BENTLEY MEEKER: It's a garage.

5

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Is all the

6

parking on the lower level or is--or there's parking--

7

BENTLEY MEEKER: Parking on every level.

8

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Say again.

9

BENTLEY MEEKER: Parking on every level

10

including the--

11

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] On

12

every level?

13

BENTLEY MEEKER: Yes.

14

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, it's a

15

building that can sustain cars on every level, but

16

can't be adapted to other kinds of uses?

17

BENTLEY MEEKER: No.

18

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Oh, I'm not an

19

architect so, but I have for--

20

BENTLEY MEEKER: [interposing] Yeah, no,

21

I'm not an architect either, but I've had architects

22

tell me this.

23

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]

24

Right. It seems a little weird to me, but I'll talk

25

to my friends that are architects--

1

2

BENTLEY MEEKER: [interposing] It seems  
a little weird to me. I'm not going to lie. It  
seems a little weird to me, too

5

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --and I'm sure  
that they'll give the reasons that that is the case.

7

BENTLEY MEEKER: Yes.

8

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, in your  
testimony, in your written testimony here you  
indicate that you're losing a significant amount of  
money every month. So, how long have you owned this  
business?

13

BENTLEY MEEKER: Eleven years.

14

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Eleven years.

15

BENTLEY MEEKER: But please don't judge  
my acumen as a business man on this deal. [laughs]

17

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Say again.

18

BENTLEY MEEKER: Please don't judge my  
acumen as a business person on this deal.

20

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Oh, no, no, no.  
So, 11 years and, um, has it--has it been the trend  
that it's been losing money, or this significant?

23

BENTLEY MEEKER: It's been losing money  
from day one. I've been noticing a drop in my

25

transient business because a lot of people--well, it's

1  
2 not too much self-evident because we're doing ride  
3 sharing and Lyft, you know, and stuff like that. So,  
4 we've been—we've been noticing that the ride sharing  
5 community has been taking a lot of our transient  
6 business away.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, and then I  
8 have another question. You talk about the  
9 possibilities of what could be, and you said those  
10 plans could include new housing with affordable  
11 housing and a community art space, which you're in  
12 discussion with your colleagues, and, of course, you  
13 say you would be in consultation with local  
14 stakeholders. So, wouldn't that, in fact, then mean  
15 that that present structure would have to be  
16 demolished?

17 BENTLEY MEEKER: I mean I don't see how  
18 the present structure survives, but, you know, we're  
19 open to—here's the thing, we're open to looking at,  
20 and we're open to talking to everybody both at the  
21 community level, at the block level--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
23 Right.

24 BENTLEY MEEKER: --you know, at the  
25 Council level.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, if the  
3 community said well, we will support housing, if, in  
4 fact, there were your—your establishment were carved  
5 out, and the community said okay we will support  
6 housing at that location that is six stories high.  
7 So, that we don't get burdened with a tower that  
8 inhibits our light and our air and our sunshine,  
9 would you agree to that?

10 BENTLEY MEEKER: I would have to do some  
11 more research and understand it. I mean it's, you  
12 know, certainly on the surface it sounds okay to me  
13 because I don't think that we're going to have a lot  
14 more opportunity than that to grow much higher than  
15 that, but I don't know. I don't know what the  
16 opportunity cost of that would be. I don't know what  
17 the expense to build inventory at that level would  
18 be. You know, again, there's a lot of—a lot of  
19 variables that go into figuring out what—what can be  
20 done and what should be done with a property like  
21 this that we haven't been able to pursue because of  
22 what's been happening.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Thank  
24 you, Madam Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, Council Member Barron. I-I just had a couple of-a couple of other questions for you Mr. Meeker. Have you had any conversation with LPC specifically on what would be allowable under the landmark designation?

BENTLEY MEEKER: We-we have had discussions with them. I don't know. We-we haven't gotten a definitive e answer of what would and would not be allowable. I-I-I almost wonder if, and I haven't dealt them a whole lot, but I almost wonder if it might make more sense in a situation like that for us to come up with a plan, and-and I don't know. I don't know. I have no idea.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay.

BENTLEY MEEKER: But they have not given any indication of what we would or would not be able to do as far as I understand it, and I do own a building in another historic district. If I want to change my door knob, it's a year and lot of headache.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, so there has been no meeting specifically around what you can do here. My-my last question on this is does any other developer have an interest in this property?

1  
2 BENTLEY MEEKER: No, I own building out  
3 and out solely, and I'm 100%--well except for the  
4 bank, clear.

5 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, alright. Thank  
6 you. Did anyone else want to say anything? Okay.

7 JASON JACKSON: Yes, could we deliver  
8 testimony? Could we deliver testimony?

9 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Yes, sure.

10 JASON JACKSON: Hello to the Council.  
11 Thank you for having me here. I'm here to speak in  
12 opposition to the landmarking of the parking garage.  
13 at 161 West 131<sup>st</sup> and 132<sup>nd</sup>. I'm a Harlem resident.  
14 I was born and raised and not in this particular  
15 district, but I've seen Harlem change over the years.  
16 I may look young but I'm not. I support new  
17 development and investment in the community, and I've  
18 learned a lot in this process, and landmarking this  
19 garage isn't really beneficial to--to that end, and  
20 obviously the LPC did a great job in explaining the--  
21 the political and cultural relevance of the  
22 district. I actually think they left out a couple.  
23 They didn't mention when Lorimer Bidden (sp?) or  
24 Jacob Lawrence, but neither of those had work hanging  
25 in this garage. So, I don't--I don't think--I don't

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2     landmarking this is-is going to protect the cultural  
3     legacy of that particular district.  If it's not  
4     landmarked I believe it has the potential to one day  
5     become something that can actually be useful in the-  
6     in the community, and that's the discussions I was  
7     having with Mr. Meeker around time that this  
8     happened.  Before then, as you mentioned, we had been  
9     talking about taking over the Saint Nick's Pub and  
10    renovating it, and as the great gentlemen owns it,  
11    challenging but great in the hand, and obviously,  
12    he's had some issues with it of late, and we hope he  
13    gets that together.  But, this has been an ongoing  
14    conversation for us on how we can sort of protect the  
15    cultural legacy of what Harlem represents.  I work in  
16    the arts.  I have all my life in the music-in the  
17    music business and hip-hop and R&B to producing  
18    theater to also now producing film.  So, it's  
19    something I'm committed to professionally as well as  
20    personally.  Thank you for hearing me out.

21                   CHAIRPERSON ADAMS:  Thank you.

22                   JEFF BOROUGHS:  Hey, my name is Jeff  
23    Boroughs.  I am also a good friend of Bentley for a  
24    long time and I've had various business transactions  
25    with Mr. Meeker.  West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street is a beautiful

1  
2 historic street. The proponents of this landmarking  
3 action should be commended for bringing their efforts  
4 to the Council. While most of this designation is  
5 appropriate the inclusion of the parking a garage at  
6 the western edge of the district should be  
7 reconsidered and should be eliminated in the final  
8 resolution the Council makes. There are community  
9 needs that must continue to be addressed in Harlem  
10 including adding to our housing stock, supporting  
11 community-based organizations, providing retail  
12 opportunities. We should not preclude alternate  
13 options like these by designing this non-descript and  
14 antique parking garage within the Historic District.  
15 Further, our community embraces the use of mass  
16 transit, alternative transit such as bicycles, which  
17 the Council should accept and promote rather than  
18 preserving a dirty old parking garage. I agree with  
19 Mr. Jackson said about the ability to create exciting  
20 spaces for the arts. I have a 25-year career in the  
21 music business as well as in television and the film  
22 business and we look forward to the possibility of  
23 creating something special there. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.  
25

1  
2                   JORDAN PRESS: Good afternoon. My name  
3 is Jordan Press. I'm a Senior Vice President at  
4 Constantinople and Vallone Consulting and I'm  
5 submitting this testimony on behalf of the owner of  
6 161 West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street in connection with the proposed  
7 Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> to 132nd Street Historic  
8 District. I'll submit the rest of my testimony for  
9 the record and just wanted to focus on one point,  
10 which came up in—in your questions that including  
11 this property within the proposed Historic District  
12 would have the practical effect of locking in the  
13 non-conforming parking garage use within the existing  
14 building. The Non-Conforming Use Provisions in the  
15 Zoning Resolution are intended to phase out non-  
16 conforming uses allowing their replacement with  
17 conforming uses consistent with surrounding  
18 development. However, conversion of the existing  
19 building to residential use isn't feasible due  
20 requirements for light and air in residential units.  
21 The nearly full lot coverage building cannot  
22 accommodate required legal windows except on the west  
23 132<sup>nd</sup> Street frontage. The existing building's  
24 approximately 6,000 square foot floor plates cannot  
25 be configured for typical resident layouts because

1  
2 the existing building is too deep. As a result,  
3 conversion of the existing building to residential  
4 use would require significant renovation. Based on  
5 our preliminary engineering report given the  
6 building's age and structural condition, the work  
7 required to convert the existing building is  
8 significant and would cost prohibitive. In addition  
9 to the structural concerns regarding potential  
10 conversion of the existing building, any residential  
11 occupancy would also potentially require signif-  
12 significant environmental remediation from the  
13 decades of parking garage use. Therefore, should 161  
14 West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street be included in the district, it  
15 would essentially preclude the owner's ability to  
16 establish conforming residential use in the future.  
17 Finally, and was noted earlier, 161 West 132<sup>nd</sup> is at  
18 the northwestern edge [bell] of the proposed district  
19 with no intervening buildings between this property  
20 and the proposed boundary line. So, we would  
21 respectfully request the subcommittee's exclusion of  
22 this property from the boundaries of the Historic  
23 District. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much.

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Thank you all for your testimony today. Much

4

appreciated.

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JORDAN PRESS: Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Oh, sorry, sorry.

7

Sorry, panel. We do have another question from

8

Council Member Barron.

9

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Good

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afternoon, Mr. Press. Good to see you again.

11

JORDAN PRESS: Thank you.

12

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: In your testimony

13

you talk about the restrictions for the present

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building being used or converted to the residential

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use, and you give the conditions in terms of light

16

and air.

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JORDAN PRESS: Yes.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But, isn't it

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true that if this were not a part of the designated

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area for landmark that the present owner or new owner

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could apply to the city for exemptions to whatever

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the zoning currently is, and get special

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consideration to build a tower or residence there.

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Isn't that true that that could happen?

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JORDAN PRESS: The--the process to get a--  
should it be included in the designation--in the  
designation, if I'm understanding you--Okay, let me  
try and then I'll end it all. If I'm understanding  
your question properly, if it were to be included  
within the designation, but then--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] No,  
if it were not included? If it were carved out. If  
we responded positively to your request--

JORDAN PRESS: [interposing] Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --that it not be  
a part of the boundaries--

JORDAN PRESS: [interposing] Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --if a new owner  
or the present owner in the future decided that well,  
you know, I'm not restricted because it's not a part  
of the boundaries, and I'm going to build a residence  
here, isn't it true that that new owner without those  
restrictions of being in the boundaries of landmark  
can put up a residence? Because your testimony talks  
about the existing building, and I'm thinking  
forward.

JORDAN PRESS: Right.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: If a new building  
came up--

JORDAN PRESS: [interposing] Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --that it could,  
in fact, be there and be a height, and get special  
permits from the city to be able to do what is not  
allowed present?

JORDAN PRESS: So, the only way that  
could be done would be through--I mean there's--there's  
the existing zoning, which it would have to be--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Right.

JORDAN PRESS: --conforming to.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Right.

JORDAN PRESS: And then, I mean--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
But the existing zoning can always be changed.

JORDAN PRESS: That would have to go  
through a full--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Right.

JORDAN PRESS: --rezoning.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

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JORDAN PRESS: --including the community  
review process, and we have to--

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Right.

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JORDAN PRESS: --come back to this--to  
this body--

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

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JORDAN PRESS: --which, you know,  
enabled--I mean that's all discretionary to the  
community and to the Council.

10

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right, okay.

13

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JORDAN PRESS: If that change were to  
occur in the future.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, thank you.

17

JORDAN PRESS: We're--we're not here to--to  
ask for that today. [laughs]

18

19

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yet. [laughter]  
Thank you.

20

21

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Well, there you go.  
Thank you.

22

JORDAN PRESS: Thanks.

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much,  
panel. Thank you, Council Member Barron for reading  
my mind. [background comments] Alright, we'd like

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to invite the next panel. Orlando Rodriguez, the  
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Andrea  
Goldwyn, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Simeon  
Branch. [background comments] It's Bancroft. Sorry.  
Historic Districts Council and Liz Volchok the  
Municipal Art Society of New York. [door bangs]  
[background comments, pause] Please state your name  
of the record and Counsel will swear you in  
afterwards.

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: [off mic] I am  
Orlando Rodriguez, from the Borough President's  
Office.

LIZ VOLCHOK: [off mic] Liz Volchok on  
behalf of the Municipal Arts Society.

SIMEON BANKOFF This is Simeon Bankoff  
from the Historic Districts Council.

ANDREA GOLDWYN: Andrea Goldwyn,  
Landmarks Conservancy.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Is that on? Was that on  
when you said your name?

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: It wasn't. I'll say  
it again if you want. Orlando Rodriguez for the  
Borough President's Office.

1  
2                   LIV VOLCHOK: Liz Volchok on behalf of  
3 the Municipal Arts Society.

4                   LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
5 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
6 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony  
7 before this Subcommittee and in answer to all Council  
8 Member questions?

9                   PANEL MEMBERS: I do.

10                  CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, you may begin.

11                  ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon, Chair  
12 Adams and member of the Council and Subcommittee on  
13 Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses. I'm here  
14 on behalf of the Manhattan Borough President Gale  
15 Brewer, and—and I'm here to express support for the  
16 designation of the Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> to 132<sup>nd</sup>  
17 Street Historic District. The Borough President  
18 wholehearted supports the designation of this  
19 proposed district, which holds tremendous social,  
20 cultural and political significance in the history of  
21 our city and our nation. The approximately 164  
22 buildings in the proposed district serve as a visual  
23 reminder of the leadership of Harlem's African-  
24 American community and affecting social and political  
25 change in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Indeed, among the

1  
2 beautiful row houses in the proposed district are  
3 several important institutional buildings including  
4 the headquarters for the New Amsterdam Musical  
5 Association and the Alpha Physical Culture Club. The  
6 former utopian neighborhood club house designed by  
7 African-American architect Vertner Woodson Tandy  
8 served as the planning headquarters for the March on  
9 Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, as was  
10 previously stated. In addition, the proposed  
11 district also exhibits obvious architectural merit,  
12 and that was articulate—articulated earlier by the  
13 LPC presenters. So, I won't reiterate, but I will  
14 get to the—the heart of why the Borough President  
15 sent me, and to testify today, and that is related to  
16 the previous panel, and—and the owners of the garage  
17 at 161 132<sup>nd</sup> Street. In the Borough President's  
18 opinion, the garage site completes the cultural and  
19 architectural narrative of the district. There is  
20 really no legitimate basis, and I didn't hear one  
21 today for why the owner's request to be removed from  
22 the district should be favored. Removing it from the  
23 boundaries [bell] LPC set forth would flout the  
24 purpose of the historical district designation. Our  
25 historic districts serve to protect our city's

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2 history against market forces, and property owners'  
3 whims. Excluding this site from the historic  
4 district would endanger the integrity of the mid-  
5 block on which it sits. All historic districts have  
6 boundaries, and the fact that this building is  
7 historically intact makes it well suited to remain in  
8 the district. Underrepresented communities have long  
9 had to fight for landmark status and historical  
10 district designations, and now is not the time to  
11 whittle away at the edges of this important  
12 achievement. The Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> through  
13 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Historic District would do much to  
14 memorialize and protect the multi-faceted legacy of  
15 Harlem and its effect on the history this city and  
16 this country. The Borough President thanks the work  
17 of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the  
18 tireless efforts of Community Board 10, and local  
19 advocacy groups like Save Harlem Now in moving this  
20 forward, and she urges this subcommittee to vote-to-  
21 to vote favorably for the designation of this  
22 historic district with the boundaries the LPC  
23 designated in their final decision. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, and we  
25 thank the Borough President.

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2                   LIZ VOLCHOK: Good afternoon. The  
3 Municipal Art Society of New York supports the  
4 designation of the Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> to 132<sup>nd</sup>  
5 Street's Historic District. The proposed district is  
6 only one of many historic areas of Harlem that should  
7 be recognized with landmark status. Like many  
8 neighbors and preservation advocates in the Harlem  
9 community, MAS would like to see more district  
10 designations in Harlem before entire neighborhoods  
11 are lost to inappropriate and out-of-scale  
12 development. The proposed West 130<sup>th</sup> and 132<sup>nd</sup>  
13 Street's Historic District includes many distinctive  
14 brick and brownstone row houses that define the  
15 residential character of this low density  
16 neighborhood, but it is not only the diversity and  
17 refinement of the Neo-Grec Renaissance Revival and  
18 Queen Anne style homes that—what makes this district  
19 notable and worthy of designation. Like other  
20 sections of Harlem lacking protection, this area is  
21 also culturally significant as a primarily middle-  
22 class African-American neighborhood. Since the early  
23 20<sup>th</sup> Century many prominent African-American clergy,  
24 professors, doctors, activists and artists have lived  
25 on the blocks encompass—encompassed by the proposed

1  
2 district. The cultural significance of the proposed  
3 district it stems beyond the artistic associations.  
4 In 1963, Activist Bayard Rustin organized the March  
5 on Washington for Jobs and Freedom from an office on  
6 170 West 130<sup>th</sup> Street. The march is credited with  
7 encouraging the passing of the Civil Rights Act of  
8 1964 and the Voting-Voting Act-Rights Act of 1965.  
9 The fact that its headquarters were on this block  
10 makes the proposed district even more significant on  
11 the national level. MAS believes that this historic  
12 district warrants the protection of Landmarks  
13 Preservation Commission. We encourage the  
14 continuation of working with Community Board 10 and  
15 Save Harlem Now to designate other significant  
16 districts in Central Harlem. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.

18 SIMEON BANKOFF: Good afternoon. Simeon  
19 Bankoff, Historic Districts Council. HDC is thrilled  
20 that this designation is moving forward. I have  
21 longer testimony, but I think that we really have  
22 spoken quite a bit about the cultural importance of  
23 this area as well as frankly its physical beauty.  
24 I'd like to take a few moments, however, to talk  
25 specifically about the garage building, which is very

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2 much of the piece with the historic—with the existing  
3 Historic District. The creation of boundaries of a—  
4 of a historic district is incredibly difficult and  
5 fraught topic. We often don't actually agree with  
6 the Landmarks Commission's final feelings about those  
7 boundaries, and often feel that this should actually  
8 be wider. With that being said, this is not the  
9 forum to really suggest that they should be wider,  
10 which they should be because all of Harlem is so very  
11 important both to the city and to the nation as an  
12 area, and much of what is said about this area could  
13 be said beyond the confines of this very small  
14 district. However, Harlem is deeply, deeply under-  
15 protected with regard to its historic resources. This  
16 is an issue that has been evident for decades, and  
17 been—we're working on it for decades, and this is a  
18 great first step for trying to redress that problem.  
19 To whittle away in the words of Gale Brewer with the—  
20 of the boundaries would be with in addition to being  
21 unfair to the—to the work of the LPC, really unfair  
22 to the community especially when listening earlier to  
23 the owner, and was talking about wanting to work with  
24 the community on a new development at that site.  
25 Landmarks works with the community every single week

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2 on new development within historic districts. There  
3 was recently, in fact a garage building on Hanson  
4 Place in Bed-Stuy that was converted into residences  
5 having worked with that block association on a design  
6 that was much better than the one originally  
7 proposed. So, we say that please to keep this  
8 building within it, development will come—may come to  
9 this site, but if so, the community should have a  
10 strong seat at the table for that. [bell]

11 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.

12 ANDREA GOLDWYN: Good afternoon, Chair  
13 Adams. I'm Andrea Goldwyn speaking on behalf of the  
14 New York Landmarks Conservancy. We're pleased to  
15 support designation of the Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup>  
16 to 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Historic District. The box of this  
17 district are a handsome collection of buildings, the  
18 row houses from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century are largely  
19 brownstones in the Neo-Grec, Queen Anne or  
20 Renaissance Revival styles. The district also  
21 contains several other building types of the same era  
22 including apartment flats buildings and the historic  
23 stable now garage under discussion, which maintain  
24 the same scale and similar stylistic elements as the  
25 row houses. Institutional and religious structures

1  
2 include the current home of the Friendship Baptist  
3 Church built in 1883. While there have been  
4 alterations among the properties, the buildings  
5 within the boundaries discussed today are mostly the  
6 same scale, height and volume as one built with  
7 substantial historic fabric, materials and details  
8 intact. We have heard a lot of about the history of  
9 this community, and our written testimony goes into  
10 it a little bit more, but for time sake, I'll just  
11 recommend reinforce the recommendation that everyone  
12 listening check out the Landmarks Commission's  
13 website, which has an exceptional resource of  
14 information about this district. The Story Map  
15 connects visual resources and compelling stories.  
16 The information conveys the remarkable history of the  
17 district that's inextricably tied to its  
18 architecture. The Conservancy looks forward to  
19 working with all of the owners and offering the  
20 services of our historic properties fund, technical  
21 services staff, and Sacred Sites Program. Thank you  
22 very much. Thank you all for your testimony today.  
23 Thank you. [background comments, pause] I'd like to  
24 invite the next panel. Valerie Jo Bradley, Save  
25 Harlem Now. Is it Sideria—is it Crestfield? Mount

1  
2 Morris Park Community Improvement Association; Angel  
3 Ayon, Save Harlem Now; C. Rachel Larock, Larock?  
4 West 130–West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Block Association. Can  
5 you all pleas state your names for the record, and  
6 the then Counsel will swear you in.

7 VALERIE JO BRADLEY: Valerie Jo Bradley.

8 RACHEL LACOCK: Rachel Lacock.

9 SEDIREA ASBERRY CRESTFIELD: Sedirea  
10 Asberry Crestfield.

11 ANGEL AYON: Angel Ayon.

12 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
13 hand?

14 ASBERRY CRESTFIELD: What?

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

20 VALERIE JO BRADLEY: Yes.

21 RACHEL LACOCK: Yes.

22 SADIERA ASBERRY CRESTFIELD: Yes.

23 ANGEL AYON: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: You may begin.  
25

1  
2 VALERIE JO BRADLEY: Good afternoon,  
3 members of the Council. My name is Valerie Bradley,  
4 and I'm President of Save Harlem Now, which is a  
5 membership not-for-profit organization—advocacy  
6 organization dedicated to protecting, preserving and  
7 celebrating Harlem's irreplaceable built heritage.  
8 Our advocacy is not merely limited to saving  
9 individual outstand structures, but also works to  
10 preserve contextual buildings, landscapes and other  
11 elements that contribute to define Harlem's sense of  
12 place, and special character. Our collaboration  
13 efforts are aimed at enriching Harlem's quality of  
14 life through continuity with the past while enhancing  
15 awareness of our local economy. We at Save Harlem Now  
16 wholeheartedly supported the designation of the  
17 Central Harlem West 130th to 132nd Street Historic  
18 District. This district is one of out of eight  
19 historic district that Community Board 10 and Save  
20 Harlem Now submitted to the Landmarks Preservation  
21 Commission for consideration in Central Harlem along  
22 with eight proposed individual landmarks and one  
23 proposed interior landmark. We are glad that our  
24 collaboration with LPC has led us to this juncture,  
25 and we look forward to continuing to work with the

1  
2 Commission and our local partners to designate the  
3 rest of the proposed landmarks in CB10 as well as  
4 others that are being proposed throughout Harlem.  
5 With regard to the designated historic district—  
6 district that you are considering today, we strongly  
7 believe that altering the boundaries would set a  
8 dangerous precedent for this and future districts in  
9 Harlem. There is an owner of a garage property whom  
10 you've just heard from on West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street who is  
11 most likely [bell] anticipating submitting a Land Use  
12 Application for an up-zoning in the future. The  
13 Landmarks Preservation Commission has already  
14 outlined why the garage on the West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street  
15 should be kept in the district. We would like to add  
16 that makes no sense to alter the boundaries of the  
17 district to accommodate one property owner when the  
18 majority of the homeowners on the block as well as  
19 homeowners on 131<sup>st</sup> and 130<sup>th</sup> Streets want the  
20 district to remain intact. We know and you know that  
21 a rezoning would most likely include demolition and a  
22 new structure that does not match the footprint of  
23 the rest of the block such as action—such actions  
24 defeat the purpose of creating an historic district.  
25 We regret that the former Lafayette Theater, the

1  
2 incurring namesake of the proposed district did not  
3 survive the wrecking ball and absent landmark-  
4 landmark protections, was demolished like many other  
5 Harlem treasures. Despite the absence of the  
6 theater, the designated historic district includes a  
7 largely intact group of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings  
8 in a neighborhood that has played and outsized role  
9 in the cultural, political, and social history of New  
10 York and the United States. Just one more paragraph.  
11 We urge you not to alter the boundaries of the  
12 district, which would almost guarantee that the  
13 stable turned garage will suffer the same fate as the  
14 Lafayette Theater. Please stand with the homeowners  
15 and the resident so 130<sup>th</sup>, 131<sup>st</sup> and 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets and  
16 vote to recommend the West 130<sup>th</sup> to 132<sup>nd</sup> Street  
17 Historic District as indicated by the Landmarks  
18 Preservation Commission. Harlem deserves additional  
19 landmark protections immediately. Otherwise, the  
20 ongoing real estate development pressures and results  
21 in gentrification will irreversibly compromise the  
22 integrity of Harlem as one of the most significant  
23 neighborhoods in America. We depend on you to  
24 protect us from the development pressures that  
25

1  
2 destroy what makes us special and unique. Help us  
3 Save Harlem Now.

4 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much.

5 RACHEL LACOCK: Thank you. Good  
6 afternoon, Chair Adams and Subcommittee members. My  
7 name is Rachel LaCock and I thank you for the  
8 opportunity to address this committee today. As the  
9 President of the West 132<sup>nd</sup> Block Association, I am  
10 here to voice our complete support for the Central  
11 Harlem Historic District along with the boundaries  
12 set forth by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.  
13 I'm going to use my time today to not rehash I think  
14 a wonderful job that many of our—our colleagues in  
15 this room have presented, and I'm going to focus  
16 instead really on the sentiments of those who live in  
17 the district and the larger community that supports  
18 us. Our block is thrilled to be included in this  
19 culturally rich and historically significant  
20 district. At all public information sessions and  
21 public hearings to date there's been overwhelming  
22 support for this district. Our block is a historical  
23 snapshot of the development and evolution of Harlem.  
24 On our block you will find a variety of structures  
25 including an operational church that is actually—

1  
2 originally was a church next to the garage, former  
3 stables, townhouses, new construction, apartment  
4 buildings and NYC Parks designated garden, all of  
5 which are important to the district and worthy of  
6 landmark status. There is discussion regarding the  
7 inclusion of 161 West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street. The residents of  
8 this district and the larger Harlem community support  
9 the inclusion of this building. This building is  
10 completely located within the mid-block of West 132<sup>nd</sup>  
11 Street and is in direct view of numerous townhouses  
12 on the south side of the street. This building is  
13 similar in stature to the buildings found along the  
14 northwest portion of our block, specifically 151,  
15 153, 151, 149, 135. These buildings are near  
16 identical in height and width and cumulatively they  
17 represent a sizeable portion of the block and define  
18 the northwest streetscape of this district. These  
19 other large buildings serve a variety of uses. All  
20 are either owned by the city or non-profits. They  
21 are rent stabilized, affordable housing, shelter or  
22 transitional housing. All of these other larger  
23 structures on our block we absolutely feel should  
24 remain within the district. [bell] Removal of any of  
25 these buildings would compromise not only our block,

1  
2 but the district as a whole. To start excluding  
3 buildings now would set a dangerous precedent for  
4 this district. The current makeup of our block is a  
5 wonderful example how buildings of many different  
6 uses have a place within historic districts. The  
7 landmark district status does not dictate the use of  
8 the building. It doesn't force the change of the  
9 use, and it doesn't dispel—and the owners of the  
10 building continue to operate as they do today or  
11 change their use as they desire. Specifically  
12 pertaining to the stables, New York City provides  
13 many examples of landmarked stables that have been  
14 repurposed and converting into schools including a  
15 school on the Upper West Side for special need, and  
16 autistic children, and high-end condos in the lower  
17 end of Manhattan. As a block, we rep—we respect the  
18 rights of all property owners within the district to  
19 change or expand their buildings per zoning and other  
20 governing regulations including the LPC requirements.  
21 The foundation of this historic district is not  
22 simply the individual buildings, but rather the  
23 cohesion of all the buildings. Although the  
24 structures on our block are quite different, they  
25 cohesively fit together with architecturally and

1  
2 historically tell a poignant history of Harlem and  
3 civil rights in America. I have spoken to Regina  
4 Smith, the President of the West 130<sup>th</sup> Street Block  
5 Association along with Lloyd Williams, the president  
6 of the 131<sup>st</sup> Street Block Association, and I can  
7 confirm that as of this weekend, all three block  
8 associations are united in support for keeping 161  
9 West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street within the boundaries of the  
10 district. We applaud the work of the Landmarks  
11 Preservation Commission, and so thoroughly  
12 documenting both the architectural and cultural  
13 significance of this district. We believe the work  
14 presents indisputable evidence supports the  
15 designation of this boundary, and we ask that you  
16 support us as well, and I would just like to add a  
17 final comment that when you look at the map you will  
18 see that this building is indeed in the block. It is  
19 in the mid-block of this proposed district. If you  
20 allow them to be removed, they will reap all the  
21 benefits of being within a historic district. They  
22 will to maintain streetscape without any of the  
23 adherence to the landmark rules, and it's really kind  
24 of granting them a free pass, and so we feel very  
25 strongly that whatever they choose to do with their

1 building we would like to work with them. We would  
2 like to support them, but we absolutely feel strongly  
3 that it should remain with the Historic District.  
4 Thank you very much for your time.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.

7 SEDIREA ASBERRY CRESTFIELD: Good  
8 afternoon, Chair Adams and the City Council  
9 Committee. The Mount Morris Park Community  
10 Improvement Association would like to recommend the  
11 approval of the designation of the Central Harlem  
12 West 130<sup>th</sup> to 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets Historic District without  
13 shrinking the boundaries of the designation. This  
14 would include Building 161 West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street as a  
15 part of the Historic District. Shamefully, fewer  
16 than 5% of the buildings in Harlem are landmarked.  
17 If you walk three blocks in either direction of the  
18 proposed area, you will find comparable buildings to  
19 the ones being considered, and I wish the designation  
20 could be larger. As a long time Harlem resident we  
21 purchased our brownstone 30 years ago near the Mount  
22 Morris Historic District. We rallied as a community  
23 and were granted an extension of the district in  
24 2015. Historic districts being—I'm sorry—historic  
25 districts bring economic value to New York City that

1  
2 go beyond higher home prices. Historic landmarks can  
3 be tourist destinations bringing outside dollars into  
4 a neighborhood. They promote a sense of community  
5 and can attract stable businesses, which bring in  
6 more tax dollars allowing for great public investment  
7 in infrastructure and services. The designation of  
8 the Central Harlem Historic District is culturally  
9 significant and there is an architectural heritage  
10 that has survived here. Home to the African-American  
11 owned Lafayette Theater, the area was occupied by  
12 artists, directors, dancers, actors, stage  
13 professionals and other cultural institutions. The  
14 area was also home to many pastors. They founded  
15 churches in the neighborhood. There were so many  
16 pastors on 131<sup>st</sup> Street, it was known as Pastor's  
17 Row. On such a few short blocks, you had a myriad of  
18 influential artists, doctors, composers, pastors,  
19 funeral directors, musicians, civil rights activists  
20 and other professionals. [bell] Once these blocks  
21 are landmarked, they will come back to life and  
22 contribute to the economic stability of the  
23 neighborhood. Lastly, Building 161 West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street  
24 must not be excluded in the historical designation.

1  
2 As a former stable, it rounds out the history of the  
3 neighborhood, and should not be destroyed.

4 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.

5 ANGEL AYON: Hello, Chair Adams. My name  
6 is Angel Ayon. I would like to thank New York City  
7 Council Subcommittee for taking another step toward  
8 protecting Harlem's unique architectural and cultural  
9 legacy. As Vice President of Save Harlem Now, a  
10 former Harlem resident and preservation advocate, I  
11 would like to express my unequivocal support for the  
12 propose 130<sup>th</sup> the 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Historic District in  
13 Harlem as designated by the New York City Landmarks  
14 Preservation Commission. Landmarking in Harlem where  
15 there is no shortage of both architectural merit and  
16 cultural significance, account only to less than 6%  
17 of the area or 30 to 50 landmarks per square mile.  
18 This metric is extremely low when compared to other  
19 areas downtown such as the Upper and West Sides,  
20 Greenwich Village, Jamaica and Lower Manhattan. Up  
21 to 50% or more of these neighborhoods are designated  
22 properties at a rate of 50 to 100 landmarks per  
23 square mile. This imbalance has for too long has led  
24 to the misplacement—to s a misperception in Harlem  
25 that landmark status is a privilege that only

1  
2 wealthier communities downtown can attain and afford.  
3 Additional landmark designations in Central Harlem  
4 like the proposed 130 to 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Historic  
5 District, will help to address this imbalance. But  
6 as you know, landmark designations are not awarded as  
7 a matter of equity, but to protect historic  
8 resources. Like many other neighborhoods in New York  
9 City, Harlem has undergone a profound transformation  
10 within the last few years. The ever-growing real  
11 estate pressures in Harlem, and the result in  
12 affecting gentrification are not incidental. They  
13 are the result among other reasons of inappropriate  
14 zoning. In the presence of inappropriate zoning,  
15 which Save Harlem Now hopes to reverse (sic)  
16 Landmarks designation is not only a recognition of  
17 architectural character and cultural significance, it  
18 is also the most effective regulatory mechanism to  
19 force into Harlem with real protections of historic  
20 character. I encourage the members of the  
21 Subcommittee to ratify the—the district as designated  
22 by LPC. We are excluding [bell] any building from  
23 the proposed boundaries included in the LPC  
24 designation. In case it is not clear, the owner of a  
25 property at 160–161 west 132<sup>nd</sup> Street have allocated

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significant resources to retain lotteries to persuade both the Community Board—the Community and elected officials that their corner property, which they plan to redevelop is not worth your preservation.

Excluding another law from the proposed Historic District boundaries will certainly lead to another outsized and out of context development that will have—that will have a serious impact on the character and the scale of the proposed Historic District.

Please ratify this Central Harlem—Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> to 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Historic District as designated by LPC. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much. Thank you all for testifying today. Thank you.

Okay, I'd like to invite the next panel. Michael Henry Adams, Sherry Culpepper and Antoinette Hamlin. [pause] Someone has not filled out a slip. I read three names.

SHERRY CULPEPPER: I invited her up. She's actually not going to speak, but—okay. [pause]

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Will all of you please state your names for the record and counsel wills swear you in.

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MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Michael Henry  
Adams.

SHERRY CULPEPPER: Sherry Culpepper.

BRIA CULPEPPER: Bria Culpepper.

ANTOINETTE HAMLIN: Antoinette Hamlin  
from New Amsterdam Musical Association.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony  
before this Subcommittee, and in answer to all  
Council Member questions?

MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: I do.

SHERRY CULPEPPER: I do.

ANTOINETTE HAMLIN: I do.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you. You may  
begin.

MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Yes, Good  
afternoon, Council members and Chair Adams. My name  
is Michael Henry Adams, and 17 years ago I came here  
to through the auspices of Council Member Bill  
Perkins, and the Council presented me with a  
Proclamation recognizing my book Harlem Lost and  
Found, an architectural and social history 1765 to  
1915, and unfortunately in the intervening years

1  
2 things have gone wildly awry because the Council was  
3 recognizing the work that I had done to document the  
4 architectural heritage of the community that I live  
5 in, and since that time, so many of the buildings  
6 depicted in my book that still survived have been  
7 destroyed including more than a dozen of the 30  
8 churches that I included in that book. Fewer than 5%  
9 of the buildings in Harlem are protected by  
10 landmarking versus two-thirds of the buildings  
11 Greenwich Village. So here we are today faced with  
12 the ultimate African-American paradox. We're offered  
13 too little too late and even then we're asked to cut  
14 it down, and this is really an appalling thing. In  
15 answer to the owner of the stable, and something that  
16 I think that you all should do is go online and look  
17 at the Bradhurst Stable Condominium at No. 458 West  
18 146<sup>th</sup> Street. That building is a former stable  
19 building built at about the same time as this  
20 building with approximately the same square footage.  
21 It's a Millward (sic) building slightly higher. This  
22 building is now a condominium selling some of the  
23 most valuable apartments in Harlem for a million  
24 dollars and up per apartment, and that's not  
25 necessarily what we want to have happen at this other

1  
2 location, but the idea that you can have an historic  
3 building that can't be retrofitted and redeveloped to  
4 make something else is just insane. [bell] If you  
5 look at PS—if you look at PS 170 on 145<sup>th</sup> Street,  
6 which was a public school building. It was falling  
7 down and with trees growing through the roof for over  
8 30 years. That building is now 100% affordable  
9 housing with a Boys' and Girls' Club of Harlem in it.  
10 So, you can do whatever you want to do. It's merely  
11 to have the will to think that our heritage, our  
12 building, our culture in Harlem of African-American  
13 people is viable and useful and worth protecting,  
14 too. There are plenty of people in New York who if  
15 they could, would not abide by the Building Codes or  
16 the Fire Codes. Landmarking is just as important  
17 because it protects and recognizes the contributions  
18 of all of the people who have helped to make New York  
19 great. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.

21 SHERRY CULPEPPER: Yes. Good afternoon.  
22 My name is Sherry Culpepper. This is my daughter  
23 Bria. We are fourth and fifth generation Harlemites.  
24 My great grandparents moved on 132<sup>nd</sup> Street in 1935,  
25 and I am here today kind of in limbo as to this

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2     landmarking because what I recognize very often  
3 happens is small landlords get hit with a lot of  
4 specialty fees in maintaining and do construction.  
5 At the same I know—I—I am proud to be a Harlemiter.  
6 My grandfather or great grandfather was actually the  
7 accountant for Marcus Garvey, and we very often—the  
8 building was used as a meeting place for the UNIA.  
9 One block away my great uncle was a choreographer who  
10 got calls from Fred Astaire. So, I've always been  
11 proud to—to be a Harlemiter, and I am actually on  
12 another level fighting a lot of laws that were passed  
13 in the City Council. It sounded like a good idea to  
14 do certain things in that area, and then all of a  
15 sudden small landlords get hit with violations  
16 through the roof. So, my question is—I did a little  
17 research. Very often when you finally do designate  
18 an area as a landmark, it then takes 20 years to  
19 actually put it into place. My question is what  
20 happens during that time period, and will there be  
21 any wait—grants? Will there be any waivers for small  
22 landlords that have to keep their building to a  
23 certain standard because of the landmark designation  
24 and that is my main concern. [pause]

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Yeah, the--the  
designation I thought I was going a little loopy but  
I was right. [bell] A designation is immediately  
effective.

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MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: May I just say that  
the--

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CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: But it's not 20 years  
or--or--or anything. That designation, the landmarking  
designation is in effect immediately.

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MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: Might I just say in  
answer to hear question of the--the Landmarks  
Conservancy and even the Landmarks Preservation  
Commission they do have a small grants program in  
addition to which there's the Federal and the New  
York State Investment Tax Credit available only to  
landmarked buildings. Now, of course, it's not free  
to be landmarked, but it isn't free. You're--you're  
required by the Building Codes of New York to  
maintain your buildings at a minimum standard even  
now without being landmarked.

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SHERRY CULPEPPER: With all due respect,  
I'm not talk about maintaining a building. I'm  
talking about like if you want to change your  
windows, if you want to make certain exterior

1  
2 changes, there is going to be a cost, and I know how  
3 people in New York can take advantage of certain  
4 situations. So, you will have contractors that will  
5 now automatically triple to do certain work because  
6 it is landmarked.

7 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, we're going--  
8 we're going to stop you there.

9 MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS: But even with the  
10 landmark--

11 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: [interposing] Hello,  
12 hello, we're going to stop you there

13 SHERRY CULPEPPER: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Mr. Adams, Ms.  
15 Culpepper, we have members of LPC right here to  
16 address you when we--when we terminate this meeting.

17 SHERRY CULPEPPER: Thank you very much.

18 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.

19 ANTOINETTE HAMLIN: Hi. Good afternoon.  
20 My name is Antoinette Hamlin. I'm President of New  
21 Amsterdam Musical Association. I just want to tell  
22 you a little bit about the organization. NAMA was  
23 established in 1904 and incorporated in 1905. It's a  
24 non-profit organization created by black musicians  
25 who were excluded from the American Federation of

1  
2 Musicians, Local 310, which is now 802 and it's  
3 because of segregation. NAMA became a key cultural  
4 reference point for jazz music during the Harlem  
5 Renaissance for the 1920s through the 1950s with such  
6 notable as Eubie Blake or Jelly Roll Morton came  
7 through. Today, NAMA remains the oldest African-  
8 American musical association in the nation. The  
9 organization supports the musical and artistry  
10 projects of its members and local neighborhood  
11 residents. It also provides space for recreational  
12 services, community events, including the teaching  
13 programs, learning programs, Monday night jam  
14 sessions, jazz art and Friday night Jam sessions. We  
15 just developed the Career (sic) Weeks Musical  
16 Scholarship Program that children seeking training in  
17 instrument. The last Sunday of March NAMA hosts a  
18 tribute to legendary vocalist for Women's History  
19 Month. He ladies bring their sounds of those grand  
20 dames of song back to life, and also features some of  
21 today's new singers. Our mission statement vows to  
22 voluntarily promote and encourage the study and  
23 production of instrumental music in various forms.  
24 We want to draw together trained musicians in the  
25 state of New York and all musical forms of education

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2 and encouragement yet managed the administrative and  
3 financial abilities of MAMA are coordinated by the  
4 volunteer efforts of a small group [bell] of its  
5 members who all have professional skills in that  
6 area. That terrific team works together to—on  
7 fundraising efforts that include building renovation  
8 funds, which is an ambitious plan. Our offices are  
9 located at 107 West 130<sup>th</sup> Street. NAMA sponsors and  
10 supports year round programming that is educational,  
11 entertaining and suitable for visitors of all age.  
12 In addition to continuing its mission to assemble,  
13 train, and encourage music—musicians, each NAMA  
14 member is also committed to the wellbeing of seniors,  
15 the education of youth and the development of  
16 important light and professional skills for adults.  
17 We are happy to be included in the Central Harlem  
18 West 130<sup>th</sup> Street to 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Historical District.  
19 Thank you so much.

20 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Than you very much  
21 for your testimony. Thank you all. Okay, we'll  
22 invite the final panel of the day. Roberta  
23 Washington [pause] Andrea Stewart, [pause] and if  
24 there's anyone else that wishes to testify today,  
25 please fill out a slip as this is our final panel on

1  
2 this matter. [pause] Oaky. Will you please state  
3 your names for the record? And Counsel will swear  
4 you in.

5 ROBERTA WASHINGTON: Roberta Washington.

6 ANDREA STEWART: Andrea Stewart of NAMA.

7 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
8 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
9 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony  
10 before this Subcommittee, and in answer to all  
11 Council Member questions?

12 ROBERTA WASHINGTON: I do.

13 ANDREA STEWART: I do.

14 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much.  
15 You may begin.

16 ROBERTA WASHINGTON: I have lived on my  
17 block on West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street for 25 years. I was very  
18 supported of—supportive of the designations of  
19 neighboring better know areas of Harlem such as  
20 Strivers' Row and Mount Morris Park as historic  
21 districts, but always felt that more of Harlem's  
22 neighborhoods deserve to be designated. As such, I  
23 was absolutely thrilled that my block is to be  
24 included in the designated proposed—to find out that  
25 my block was to be included in the designated

1  
2 proposed Historic District of our own, a designation  
3 that highlights our district as one equally rich in  
4 culture, historical and architectural merit. It is  
5 the district with community intact brownstones  
6 designed by architects who were well known at the  
7 time in colors and hues that are recognizable as the  
8 New York signature. But in our districts some  
9 symmetry or buildings is occasionally interrupted by  
10 time and life. While most of the housing in the  
11 district is intact townhouse, several of other  
12 townhouses were built within the last 15 years. Some  
13 lots within the proposed district contain apartment  
14 buildings, affordable housing and shelter and  
15 transitional housing, and there are also churches,  
16 stables, which became a garage and a New York City  
17 park designated garden all of which are important to  
18 the district in creating an authentic historic  
19 snapshot of the development of Harlem. Typical of  
20 the changes associated with New York the buildings  
21 constructed—were constructed for others, but by the  
22 Turn of the Century were inhabited by middle-class  
23 African-American who had moved from other parts of  
24 Manhattan. By the 1920s, it was a solid Black  
25 middle-class neighborhood, which attracted, as you

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2 heard before, actors, artists, ministers, physicians  
3 among others. The district was the home of the first  
4 all black athletic club in the United States [bell]  
5 and of ragtime Joplin-Scott Joplin among others.  
6 It's also a place and a base for a lot of the social  
7 activities and social movements that where national  
8 and not just limited to our city. The residents of  
9 the proposed district welcomed the garage located  
10 down the street from my house on West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street as  
11 an innate part of our district. Although we  
12 understand that this space can be develop as  
13 something other than what it currently is, we see  
14 that lot and that building as an important piece of  
15 the history of our district and as such-as such  
16 believe that it should be recognized within the  
17 district. Although the structures are varied, they  
18 all cohesively fit together to architecturally and  
19 culturally tell our story, our history of that part  
20 of Harlem and civil rights in America. At all the  
21 public information sessions I attended both in Harlem  
22 and at LPC, the majority of my neighbors and I  
23 overwhelmingly gave support enthusiastically to the  
24 district, and at the same time we called this and  
25 other areas to be landmarked. But there was also a

1  
2 call for the borders as currently delineated to be  
3 maintained, and I urge the City Council to support  
4 the designation of the Central Harlem Historic  
5 District with the boundaries as currently proposed.  
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, Ms.  
8 Washington. I'd also like to call up at this time  
9 Willie Mack to join this panel. Okay, Mr. Mack,  
10 please state your name for the record.

11 WILLIE MACK: Willie Mack.

12 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
13 hand.

14 WILLIE MACK: I'm sorry.

15 LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right  
16 hand.

17 WILLIE MACK: Oh, yes.

18 LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the  
19 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in  
20 your testimony before this Subcommittee and in answer  
21 to all Council Member questions?

22 WILLIE MACK: Yes I do.

23 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you.

24 WILLIE MACK: Okay, this is personal to  
25 me. Anyway, my name is Willie Mack and Chairman of

1  
2 the Board of NAMA. I was introduced to NAMA in 1968  
3 at a playground in Harlem, and now actually it's—it's  
4 personal. A person spoke to my friend who was  
5 practicing the saxophone with me, and he said—but he  
6 actually played something that I never heard before,  
7 and I said well, where did you get that from? And he  
8 said Mrs. Seals, Gladys Seals at NAMA and so that's  
9 how I began to be associated with NAMA, and I've seen  
10 what they've done all of those maybe 50 years, and  
11 I've seen the struggles that they've gone through and  
12 I've seen many changes, you know, within the  
13 organization, but the one thing that they raved for  
14 was what's happening now, the landmark status.  
15 That's always been in the background. The group of  
16 people that are running that Ms. Hamlin just spoke  
17 actually were the main forces behind this—the making  
18 of—of what has come to fruition now, the status of  
19 landmark. So, it pains me feel that, you know, we  
20 have to wait even longer because of one building. So  
21 that's why I'm saying it's personal. The other thing  
22 is that in addition to [bell] teaching of the  
23 historical part of it is—is so outstanding, you know,  
24 people like James Europe (sic) who was our first  
25 musical director, Will Marion Cook of Broadway fame,

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2 Eubie Beck, of course, all these people, you know,  
3 were part of NAMA. They were NAMA members. In 1903  
4 to just back up a little bit, there were just a group  
5 of musicians in an apartment on 150<sup>th</sup>—on 54<sup>th</sup> Street  
6 actually that as Mrs. Hamilton mentioned earlier were  
7 excluded from the White Union. So, they put their  
8 heads together in order to maintain—to establish  
9 working conditions for themselves. Just two years  
10 later in 1905, the New Amsterdam Musical Association  
11 was incorporated. That only took two years right?  
12 So in my head I'm saying while it has taken two—it  
13 took two years for that, then why is it taking so  
14 long for this? You know, that's—I'm thinking why is  
15 it taking so long for us to—to have this status of  
16 landmark. You know that not only NAMA, but so many  
17 other buildings and organizations in the community,  
18 you know, deserve. That counts on fingers (sic) is  
19 going on. So that's why say that us completely  
20 support, you know, the designation as it is with the  
21 boundaries, right. Lastly, I just want to thank you,  
22 you know, for, you know, your efforts in moving  
23 forward with your landmark status of 130<sup>th</sup>, 131<sup>st</sup> and  
24 132<sup>nd</sup> Street, and then the other thing I want to  
25 mention, and even though I had something prepared,

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I'm speaking my heart—from the heart. I grew up on 19 West 118<sup>th</sup> Street, and I took a ride by there a couple of years ago jut to see the building that I lived in. It's no longer there. There's no 19 West 118<sup>th</sup> Street any more. It's just—it's merged with 21 and 17 that kind of things. Well, it's not my—it wasn't my building and, you know, that's—that's something that happened, but when I saw that, I can't tell how my heard sank because I couldn't even see the number on the building that I used to live in and that kind of thing, and I—I, you know, that's why I'm so, you know, previous, you know and so fully support, you know, the landmark status with the designations as they are without any changes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you, Mr. Mack.

ANDREA STEWART: Thank you, Council. I'm from New Amsterdam Musical Association myself. I'm the treasurer. My name is Andrea Stewart and this is also personal for me as well because I did not prepare anything, but I just wanted to say how I feel very honored being part of this landmark time we're having right now for the 135<sup>th</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup>—I'm sorry—130<sup>th</sup>, 132<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Street. It's—it's an amazing honor to

1  
2 be a part of this, and I—and be a part of NAMA as a  
3 whole. I hope everyone here gets a chance to come  
4 out to NAMA and experience it as well. I don't know  
5 what else to say because I'm a little nervous, but  
6 thank you once again for this honor that we are being  
7 a part opposed and being a part of this community and  
8 my mother and my father are both Harlemites. My  
9 mother was born in Harlem Hospital. So, for me a  
10 person who lives in Queens to come out here—to come  
11 out to Harlem every wee to—to experience it, is just  
12 amazing. Now Harlem is part of my home as well.  
13 Even though I am not living there, I do live there.  
14 I live there every Saturday, every Monday. I'm  
15 always there because my heart belongs to Harlem as  
16 well. Don't tell Queens. Don't tell Queens.  
17 [laughter] And that's it and very short and sweet.

18 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you Ms.  
19 Stewart.

20 ANDREA STEWART: [interposing] I really  
21 appreciate it.

22 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: You are a Queens  
23 resident of mine. Thank you. [laughter] Thank you  
24 very much panelists. I appreciate your time today.  
25 Thank you so much. Are there any other of the public

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2 that wish to testify at this time? Seeing none, I  
3 now close the public hearing on this item, and that  
4 concludes our public hearings for today. I'd like to  
5 thank the members of the public all of you, my  
6 colleagues, counsel, Land Use staff for attending  
7 today' hearing, for all your help. This meeting is  
8 hereby adjourned. [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 August 19, 2018