

HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT
2010-2011



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

About HDC

The Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York's historic neighborhoods. We partner with more than 500 civic and community-based organizations and provide them with the tools and expertise they need to preserve the buildings, streetscapes and open spaces that are important to the character of their neighborhoods.

HDC is the only organization in New York City that works directly with the grassroots, neighborhood-based preservation constituency. Originally founded 40 years ago as a coalition representing New York's designated historic districts, we have expanded to encompass all historic communities across the five boroughs and have grown to become the foremost citywide voice for historic preservation.

Following a mandate of community-based advocacy, HDC works continuously to enlarge and educate the preservation constituency—producing zoning and architectural surveys of unprotected neighborhoods, meeting with legislators and city officials, and creating educational programs on the techniques and strategies of neighborhood preservation.

HDC's professional staff works closely with a dedicated Board of Directors and Advisers who represent more than three dozen historic neighborhoods and are drawn from the fields of architecture, education, history, urban planning, marketing, law, design, public relations, journalism and community activism. Their collective expertise aids community groups in their campaigns to preserve buildings and communities across the five boroughs.



In 2011 the Historic Districts Council reached a very special milestone of 40 years as the citywide advocate for New York's historic neighborhoods, buildings and open spaces. Who knew that when a small group of volunteer representatives from the city's designated historic districts banded together four decades ago, it would grow into the robust, professionally staffed, yet still grassroots-based organization we are now? Today we have a constituency of more than 500 neighborhood-based organizations as well as thousands of individual activists across the city in over 100 designated historic districts and many other historic neighborhoods, all dedicated to the preservation of their communities.

To celebrate our 40th birthday, we introduced a host of new initiatives and programs, chief among them Six to Celebrate, which identifies six historic New York City neighborhoods that merit preservation as priorities for HDC's advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period. We also further expanded our educational programming for preservation practitioners and introduced new exclusive behind-the-scenes tours. Several neighborhoods that HDC has been advocating for became designated historic districts, including a portion of the Art Deco Grand Concourse in The Bronx; more of the remarkable brownstone neighborhood of Crown Heights North and the wood-frame houses of Wallabout, both in Brooklyn; as well as the historically significant African-American community of Addisleigh Park in Queens.

The past two years have not been without challenges. Preservation has become more and more politicized, despite the evident merit of individual buildings and neighborhoods. In those two years the New York City Council overturned two designated landmarks, the almost 200-year-old Hardenbrook-Somarindyck House at 135 Bowery in Manhattan and Grace Memorial Hall in Jamaica, Queens. The LPC declined to hold hearings for several significant buildings, including 35 Cooper Square (a lovely Federal-era townhouse on the upper Bowery) and the beach colony of Cedar Grove on Staten Island, the last of its kind in the city. These and other losses are reminders for preservationists to remain vigilant and to continue fighting to ensure that our old-growth communities and buildings are judged on their merits and do not become the victims of political machinations.

Thanks for all your support in enabling us to reach our significant milestone. Now that we're officially grown-up, we're dedicated to working harder than ever on preservation issues in all five boroughs. With your involvement, together we will preserve what's great about New York City for the next 40 years and beyond.

Simeon Bankoff



Left: Neighborhood Preservation Center, home of HDC.

On the cover: Grand Central Terminal clock detail; Preservation Lobby Day 2010.

40TH BIRTHDAY YEAR EVENTS

Birthdays mean parties and in 2011, HDC celebrated with several special events. In January more than 150 guests joined us at the Bohemian National Hall in Manhattan for a birthday party and to launch the Six to Celebrate program. Attendees included Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Robert Tierney, New York City Councilmember Daniel Dromm and a representative from Councilmember Vincent Gentile's office, who presented HDC with a special proclamation in honor of its 40th year.

In June some early leaders of HDC, including Kent Barwick, Bronson Binger, Michael Gruen and Lorna Nowve, got together for *In the Beginning: The Creation of the Historic Districts Council*, a special discussion of HDC's formation and early days. The conversation was moderated by Anthony C. Wood, HDC's chair emeritus and founder of the New York Preservation Archive Project, and was held at the historic club The Players, on Gramercy Park. More than 75 people joined us for this lively discussion and look back at HDC.

For a listing of all 40th Birthday Year event supporters, see page 13.

From top: HDC President Francoise Bollack with Tom Killian and Harry Kendall at HDC's birthday party; HDC founders Kent Barwick, Michael Gruen, Lorna Nowve and Bronson Binger with moderator Anthony C. Wood; the crowd toasts to 40 years of HDC.



SUPPORTING NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERS

SIX TO CELEBRATE: As part of its 40th-birthday celebration in 2011, HDC launched a new annual initiative, Six to Celebrate, an advocacy and public-awareness campaign for six significant but unprotected historic areas in New York City. The chosen areas become HDC's priorities for advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period, and HDC assists them in a variety of ways on a wide range of community-preservation projects. As part of the program, tours of each area were offered (which proved to be incredibly popular) and public education programs about each site were also offered. The inaugural Six were The Bowery, Inwood and Mount Morris Park in Manhattan, Jackson Heights in Queens, and Bedford-Stuyvesant and Gowanus in Brooklyn. Read on for just some of the successes from the program's inaugural year.



Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn

A number of standing-room-only community meetings focused on preservation led to an extraordinarily positive public hearing before the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the long-awaited expansion of the Stuyvesant Heights Historic District. Invigorated local leadership continues to campaign actively for the preservation of other sections of the remarkable neighborhood, and the LPC is actively considering more than 8,000 buildings for possible landmark designation in this area.

The Bowery, Manhattan

An action-packed year on The Bowery ended with vast media attention being shined on the district. The entire thoroughfare, from Chatham to Cooper Squares, was placed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic



Places. Funding for the nomination was also secured from national partners. Several individual buildings on The Bowery were considered or designated as individual landmarks, although the designation of the almost-200-year-old house at 135 Bowery was rejected by the City Council. Despite this setback, the Landmarks Commission has shown strong interest in small districts and other individual properties on The Bowery, and continued positive action is hoped for.



Gowanus, Brooklyn

Funding was secured from state and national partners for a National Register of Historic Places survey and nomination for the area, and work has begun on the project. Neighbors and community residents also organized to review and comment on a planned big-box store that would have a major impact on an historic site.



Inwood, Manhattan

An architectural survey of the neighborhood, along with historical information, was completed and submitted to the Landmarks Commission for informational purposes, and a meeting has been set up to further discuss properties in the area. Several large community meetings have been held to raise public awareness of the area's history. Additionally, major capital funding for parks improvements was secured by local advocates, and a distinctive historic step-street has been scheduled for much-needed restoration.



Jackson Heights, Queens

A complete proposal, including maps, surveys and building information, of the hundreds of structures in a proposed extension to the existing historic district was submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission.



Mount Morris Park, Manhattan

Local interest in expanding the historic district spurred officials at the local community board to suggest an even larger extension to the historic district than originally proposed. Local advocates are now working with the community board to advance this proposal.

Six to Celebrate is generously supported by The New York Community Trust and HDC's Six to Celebrate Committee. Additional support for the Six to Celebrate Tours is provided by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and New York City Councilmembers Inez Dickens, Daniel Garodnick, Vincent Gentile, Stephen Levin and Rosie Mendez.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERS PROGRAM 2010–2011 LANDMARK DESIGNATIONS



NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERS PROGRAM: The Neighborhood Partners Program is an initiative designed to formalize HDC's relationship with its constituency of more than 500 community-based organizations. For 2010 and 2011, HDC continued the popular monthly Monday Morning Coffee Talk Series, which allow neighborhood advocates to learn more about specific concerns that directly impact their communities. We focused on improving the dialogue between the current administration and activists and on continuing to build bridges between communities and nonprofit organizations that can provide services and resources. We also developed special brochures to answer commonly asked questions about landmarking for coops, condos and apartment buildings.



Left to right: Kathy Howe addresses Coffee Talk attendees; Noonan Plaza, The Bronx; Addisleigh Park, Queens; West-Park Presbyterian Church, Manhattan.

Topics during 2010 and 2011 included:

- Questions and Answers with the New York City Departments of Design and Construction, Housing Preservation and Development, Parks and Recreation, and Small Business Services.
- Informational sessions with New Yorkers for Parks, Enterprise Community Partners, the Manhattan and Bronx Land Trusts, and the District Manager of Brooklyn Community Board 6.



- Sessions on how to read architectural drawings with Laura Heim, AIA; how to conduct a survey with architectural historian Gregory Dietrich; how to preserve neighborhood commercial districts with Dadras Architects; and how to submit a National Register nomination with the New York State Office of Historic Preservation's Kathy Howe.
- The launch of the Elizabeth R. and Robert A. Jeffe Preservation Fund for New York City, administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- A special discussion with the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding proposed new rules for landmarked buildings.
- A professional seminar for architects and building managers about Local Law 11 with a representative of Superstructures.

2010 and 2011 LANDMARK DESIGNATIONS: In the past two years the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated more than 60 individual landmarks, a major increase



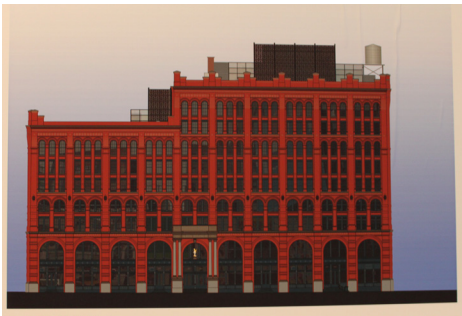
over 2009. HDC was the only organization to testify on each and every one of these landmarks. One of the more notable designations was West-Park Presbyterian Church, considered to be among the most significant Romanesque Revival-style structures in New York City. A large coalition including Landmark West!, Friends of West-Park and City Councilmember Gale Brewer fiercely advocated to make sure the designation was approved. HDC subsequently honored this coalition with a Grassroots Preservation Award.

The LPC also designated numerous historic districts, many of which HDC had been assisting over the entire landmarking process. Among the most significant designations were the Grand Concourse in The Bronx (an HDC 2004 priority) and Crown Heights North Phase II and Wal-labout in Brooklyn. Addisleigh Park in Queens, a neighborhood of significant African-American culture and history, was also designated after a process started in 2008 with an HDC-initiated survey and report.

LPC also designated several buildings from HDC's Heard But Not Designated Priorities List, which identifies buildings that have been officially considered by the LPC but never voted on: Alderbrook, a rare rural-style villa; the Union Reformed Church of Highbridge; and Noonan Plaza, a standout Art Deco apartment complex, all in The Bronx. The LPC also finally designated the interior of the Modernist bank building, the former Manufacturers Hanover Trust on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

GUIDING DEVELOPMENT IN HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

HDC brings a neighborhood-based perspective to broad discussions of both public policy and specific agency determinations. HDC regularly testifies before public bodies on planning and zoning, land use, landmark designation, new construction, demolition and proposed alterations that affect historic neighborhoods. HDC serves as the voice for these neighborhoods, few of which have either staff or volunteers to follow the deliberations and decisions of public agencies.



HDC@LPC: HDC is the only advocacy organization to review and track all applications from all five boroughs that come before the Landmarks Preservation Commission for Certificates of Appropriateness. In 2010 and 2011, HDC's Public Review Committee assessed an average of 400 applications each year and testified on about half of them. HDC's testimony and LPC decisions are posted on our website, and more in-depth notes are kept in the office database. Tracking the results helps HDC create more effective testimony, and this citywide knowledge is also helpful to neighborhood groups that might not have encountered a specific issue before.

While many projects come to public hearings for approval, many more, roughly 90%, are handled at staff level according to rules set out by the commis-

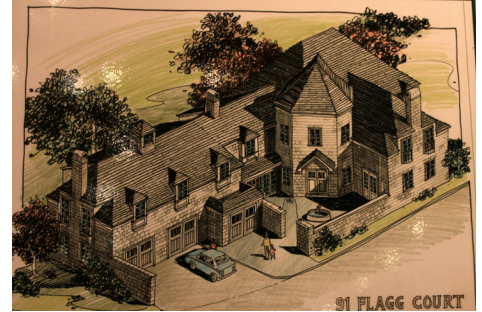
sion. In order to streamline the approval process, the commission proposed changes to those rules in 2010. HDC helped our neighborhood partners to analyze the proposal, including hosting a question-and-answer session with LPC's counsel, and craft their testimony. Our efforts resulted in a number of positive changes in how new window openings on secondary facades, signage, and rooftop and rear-yard additions are handled at staff level.



- **Adaptive reuse: The O'Toole Building** in the Greenwich Village Historic District, once threatened with demolition under a hardship granted in 2008, was given a second chance three years later when new owners sought to turn the mid-20th century Modernist building into a health-care center. HDC's comments helped ensure the needed alterations would not detract from the unique building, including retaining more curves on the north elevation, reducing the removal of historic fabric on the south elevation, changing rooftop duct placement to decrease its visibility, and more appropriate signage.

- **Rooftop additions:** HDC strongly opposed the construction of a two-story glass-and-metal rooftop addition that threatened to mar one of the city's most distinctive individual landmarks, the **Puck Building**. After five iterations, a much smaller, simpler, less visible design was approved, preserving the building's distinctive silhouette.

- **New construction:** In the case of a building on the **Ernest Flagg Estate** on Staten Island, a new addition felt

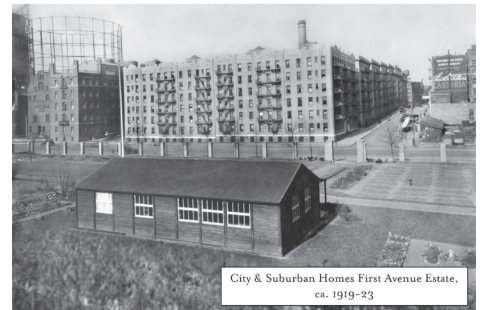


more like totally new construction. HDC testimony pointed out that the large, turreted, mansard-roofed structure that violated numerous zoning codes was not in the spirit of the 1908 garage or other cottages that Flagg designed on his model estate. The plan was not approved, and no modified proposal has been introduced.

Left to right: proposals for the Puck Building, Manhattan; O'Toole Building, Manhattan; and the Ernest Flagg Estate, Staten Island.

STRENGTHENING PRESERVATION EFFORTS

- PRESERVATION LOBBY DAY:** In May 2010, HDC joined with dozens of our friends and colleagues for the fourth annual Preservation Lobby Day, labeled People Want Preservation! We had a terrific turnout including attendance by New York City Councilmember Brad Lander, chair of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses.
- PRESERVATION ACTION FUND:** As part of HDC's 40th birthday celebration and thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, in 2011 HDC launched the Preservation Action Fund (PAF), a board-authorized restricted fund that HDC can utilize to supplement preservation advocacy activities. The fund is specifically intended to be used in instances where financial resources can directly benefit preservation campaigns, including such expenditures as fees for structural assessments or preservation plans, fees for conducting building surveys, attorney's fees for legal advice or pursuing legal actions, or for designing and printing advocacy materials. For PAF's first allocation, HDC distributed \$3,000 to the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts. This grant allowed Friends to fund a study refuting the hardship application for the landmarked First Avenue Estate, an early example of affordable housing in New York City.
- PRESERVATION CONFERENCE:** The Sixteenth Annual Preservation Conference, "Preservation in New York: The Next Generation," examined the future of preservation in New York City as a movement, both in terms of the types of buildings that should be preserved and the audiences that need to be engaged. Speakers at this 2010 event addressed such themes as vernacular and cultural landmarks and youth and minority audience development. In 2011 the conference theme was "Looking Forward, Looking Back: Forty Years of Preserving New York City Neighborhoods," which examined the evolving preservation movement since HDC's founding in 1971. Both series included an opening-night reception and preservation fair, a keynote presentation, panel discussions, and walking tours throughout the city. The conference is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional support is provided by New York City Councilmembers Inez Dickens, Daniel Garodnick, Stephen Levin and Rosie Mendez.
- In 2010-2011, we presented two installments of "**ABOUT NEW YORK,**" HDC's popular lecture, film and tour series on significant types of buildings and sites in the city. In 2010 we held "Learning in New York," concerning the preservation and significance of schools, libraries and other institutions of learning. "Labor in New York" was the topic for 2011, which examined the significant sites across the city related to the labor movement. Among the specific sites covered were the renovation of several Carnegie Libraries in Brooklyn, visits to labor sites in Greenwich Village, a screening of the classic film, "On the Waterfront," and a behind-the-scenes look at a few of the schools designed by the renowned school superintendant C. B. J. Snyder. More than 300 people attend the series each year. This series is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional support is provided by New York City Councilmembers Inez Dickens, Daniel Garodnick, Stephen Levin and Rosie Mendez.



*Top to bottom:
Preservation Lobby Day 2010; First Avenue
Estate; 2011 Preservation Conference; Greenwich
Village Walking Tour as part of 2011 About New
York Serie.*

• We have continued the long-running **GRASSROOTS PRESERVATION AWARDS**, the only awards event dedicated to neighborhood preservationists. Honorees in 2010 were Alice and Agate Court Historic District, John Antonides of the Hubbard House, Coalition to Save West-Park Presbyterian Church, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, “Friend in High Places” City Councilmember Rosie Mendez, 2nd District, “Friend from the Media” Nicholas Hirshon of the New York Daily News, and the Mickey Murphy Award for lifetime achievement winner Joyce Mendelsohn. In 2011, HDC moved to a new venue, the landmarked Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims in Brooklyn Heights, where we honored Cedar Grove Beach Club, Central Queens Historical Association, Mary Kay Gallagher, Prospect Cemetery Association, “Friend in High Places” State Senator Bill Perkins, 30th District, “Friend from the Media” The Architect’s Newspaper, and Mickey Murphy Award recipients Bronson Binger and Ann Walker Gaffney.

• **CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONALS:** HDC expanded its educational programming to address more issues affecting preservation professionals. In 2010 and 2011 several high-profile cases brought to light the urgent need for more training and awareness about structural shoring for historic buildings. On Macdonough Street in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a rowhouse was almost lost due to incorrect structural work, and in Harlem several floors of the landmarked former Corn Exchange building were demolished due to instability. HDC held a special forum, “The Shore Thing,” in September 2010 and November 2011 with representatives from the New York City Department of Buildings and noted engineers and architects. We also offered the popular seminars “Working on Landmark Buildings” and “Replacement Materials for Historic Buildings.”

• **SECRET LIVES TOURS:** In 2010, HDC launched this new series of tours, which gain access to some of New York City’s most storied locations. Venues include many buildings and areas not generally open to the public. Attendees have been able to go behind the scenes at Grand Central Terminal, One Wall Street and the former TWA Terminal at JFK Airport, in addition to visiting private homes in Clinton Hill and Murray Hill.



*Top to bottom:
Grassroots Awardee Alice and Agate Court;
Grassroots Awardee Councilmember Rosie
Mendez; Secret Lives Tour of Grand Central
Terminal; Grand Central Terminal clock detail;
Secret Lives Tour of One Wall Street.*

LANDMARK LIONS AWARD

In autumn each year HDC presents the Landmarks Lion Award for exceptional devotion and success in protecting landmarks and historic districts. In 2010 the award was given to historian, architect and educator Robert A. M. Stern, who has long championed New York City's architecture from all periods in all five boroughs. The event took place at the landmark Four Seasons restaurant, where many notables joined us to fete Mr. Stern. HDC returned to the Four Seasons in 2011 to honor renowned preservationist Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, a leading voice on many defining urban issues in New York City and around the country. More than 300 guests attended to hear presenters former Governor Mario M. Cuomo, Paul Goldberger, Hugh Hardy and Robert A. M. Stern pay tribute to Barbaralee's long and illustrious career.



*From top:
Simeon Bankoff and President Leo Blackman
with 2010 honoree Robert A. M. Stern; guests at
2010 Landmarks Lion; guests at 2011 Landmarks
Lion; Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel with
Simeon Bankoff and Governor Mario M. Cuomo.*

CONTRIBUTORS 2010

The Historic Districts Council gratefully acknowledges the many individuals, organizations, foundations, corporations, elected officials and government agencies that generously supported our mission during Fiscal Year 2010.

HDC EXTENDS SPECIAL THANKS TO THESE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS:

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New York City Council
Manhattan Delegation
New York City Councilmember
Daniel Garodnick, 4th District
New York City Councilmember
Vincent J. Gentile, 43rd District
New York City Councilmember
Jessica S. Lappin, 5th District
New York City Councilmember
Rosie Mendez, 2nd District
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
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 Sutton Area Community
 Tenth & Stuyvesant Streets Block Association
 Tottenville Historical Society
 Tribeca Community Association
 Turtle Bay Association
 Union Square Community Coalition
 Weeksville Heritage Center
 West End Preservation Society
 West 54th-55th Street Block Association
 West Village Committee
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 Edward O. Wagner
 Suzanne Wasserman
 Christina Wilkinson & Steve Garza
 Beth Windsor
 Fred Wistow
 James Wolford
 Anthony C. Wood
 Kate Wood & David Sprouls

CONTRIBUTORS 2011

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**2010 AND 2011 FINANCIAL STATEMENT (CONDENSED)
FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2010 AND DECEMBER 31, 2011**

INCOME

General Operating Support	
Foundation Grants	\$259,850
Government Grants	\$110,172
Private Contributions	\$55,668
 Program Support	 \$21,884
Special Events	\$115,965
Interest & Dividends	\$32,471
 Total Income	 \$578,959

EXPENSES

Administrative	\$59,912
Preservation & Advocacy	\$189,577
Development	\$58,070
Special Events	\$74,540
 Total Expenses	 \$382,099

TOTAL FUNDS (AS OF 12/31/10)

Assets	\$421,270
Fixed Assets	\$1,534

INCOME

General Operating Support	
Foundation Grants	\$299,532
Government Grants	\$46,227
Private Contributions	\$64,882
 Program Support	 \$22,958
Special Events	\$209,798
Interest & Dividends	\$8,192
 Total Income	 \$651,589

EXPENSES

Administrative	\$68,924
Preservation & Advocacy	\$222,270
Development	\$55,945
Special Events	\$127,270
 Total Expenses	 \$474,859

TOTAL FUNDS (AS OF 12/31/11)

Assets	\$598,000
Fixed Assets	\$2,335

A complete copy of the HDC audited financial statement is available upon written request to Historic Districts Council, 232 East 11th Street, New York, NY 10003, or to New York State Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.