

DISTRICT LINES

NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL SPRING 2007 VOL. XXI NO. 1

SUNNYSIDE UP! QUEENS COMMUNITY IS ON LPC's FRONT BURNER AT LAST

SUNNYSIDE GARDENS, QUEENS, is poised to become an historic district, the seventh in that borough. The Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing April 17, a preliminary step to designation. It has not been an easy journey.

Built between 1924 and 1928, Sunnyside Gardens was one of the earliest fully realized examples in the United States of the ideals of the British Garden City movement and was the first development created to express the ideas of the Regional Planning Association of America. The 77-acre community consists of rows of small town houses and nine four- to six-story apartment buildings, a total of more than 600 buildings, arranged around landscaped courtyards within the street grid of Queens. Its plan incorporates generous open and common spaces. The architects—Clarence Stein, Henry Wright and Frederick Ackerman—combined traditional elements with understated modernism, producing buildings in a sim-

plified Colonial Revival or Art Deco style. Intended for lower-middle-class families, the houses were arranged to foster a strong sense of community on the principle that the open space, so unusual for that time, more than compensated for the small, if solidly constructed, brick houses. Lewis Mumford, the influential writer and critic of planning and the author in 1922 of "The Study of Utopias," advised on the planning of Sunnyside and for ten years lived there with his family.

After such hopeful beginnings, history was not kind to Sunnyside Gardens. During the Great Depression nearly two-thirds of

the residents lost their houses to foreclosure, and in 1966 the original covenants imposing design restrictions expired. Many homeowners built fences into the common gardens, altered facades, constructed decks and added driveways.

For a time it seemed that this unusual ensemble would be lost, but two factors saved it. First, in 1974 the Department of City Planning made Sunnyside Gardens a Special Planned Community Preservation District. This zoning provision was designed to protect the open spaces by requiring permits for alterations. Second, some residents formed the Sunnyside



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Many houses, as the one above, evoke the British Garden City movement of the 1920's. Right, map showing boundaries and buildings of the proposed district.





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Low rise buildings line verdant courtyards in the 600 building neighborhood of the aptly named Sunnyside Gardens, being considered for designation as an historic district by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Its advocates will receive a Grassroots Preservation Award from HDC in May.

Foundation and convinced several courts to protect the original design.

But the special zoning had not been written to preserve design elements, which remained unprotected. Nor was voluntary

compliance sufficient to protect them. For that reason, in 2003 some of the residents formed a new group, the Sunnyside Gardens Preservation Alliance, with the specific goal of having the neighborhood landmark-designated.

The effort has been a rocky one. As historian and television star Barry Lewis, the Historic Districts Council's 2005 Landmarks Lion, commented for New York Newsday in 2003, "Almost everyone agrees that [Sunnyside Gardens is] a special place, but when regulations are proposed to limit what people can do with their property, there has always been a fight."

LPC is expected to decide on the designation in May. HDC feels that just getting a hearing warrants an award, and it will present one to the Sunnyside Gardens Preservation Alliance at its annual Grassroots Preservation Awards ceremony on May 10. (See box on page 8.)

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

IN MARCH the Historic Districts Council's annual Preservation Conference "recycled" keynote speaker Donovan Rypkema from our first conference 13 years ago

because he was so prescient then. Our theme—that historic preservation is environmentally friendly—was demonstrated by his address and by the panel discussions, which emphasized that keeping our existing built environment in use is central to preserving our natural resources.

This continued a theme from last year's conference, when our panels on "Race, Place, Money and Art" showed that historic preservation could work hand in hand with affordable housing and community development. Overall, both these conferences point to the same conclusion: historic preservation is a key element in "smart growth." If we are to plan properly for our urban, suburban and rural environments, we must include the preservation, restoration and reuse of our existing built environment. This will lead inevitably to a "happy, healthy and wise" future.

In February we held a reception and auction for a very important cause at the Manhattan home of Historic Districts Council adviser Joseph Pell Lombardi. The funds raised went to a new HDC



TWIG

David Goldfarb

project aimed at mobilizing "preservation voters." Our pilot project focused on a special City Council election in Brooklyn. Although we take no position regarding candidates, we worked with community preservation groups to hold candidate forums and to educate citizens to ask the right questions. Later in 2007 and in 2009 we will expand the project across the city. In my humble (and biased) opinion this project enhances HDC's role as the foremost grassroots preservation organization in the city. When organizing for more city

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NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

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THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL IS THE CITYWIDE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK'S DESIGNATED HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND FOR NEIGHBORHOODS AND INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS THAT MERIT PRESERVATION. THE COUNCIL IS DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS LAW AND TO FURTHERING THE PRESERVATION ETHIC.

funds for the Landmarks Preservation Commission, for better-qualified commissioners and for legislation to better protect landmarks and potential landmarks, no group reaches deeper into the city's neighborhoods and communities to obtain support than HDC does.

This is my last President's Column, as HDC's board will elect a new president at its annual meeting in June. I have truly enjoyed my tenure as president and feel that the organization has made great strides. I look forward to watching as HDC strives to live up to the goals it has set for itself in its recent strategic plan.

I believe that a volunteer organiza-

tion works best when it is able to bring in new blood and does not become identified with a single individual or small group of people. As HDC's board rotation policy begins to take effect, I hope we will see the positive impact of these principles. Our longest-serving members will continue to provide guidance as new directors and advisers join us. Hopefully our many friends and supporters will step forward to join our policy-making board. With your help and support we will continue to grow.

Thank you for that support. I look forward to seeing you at future events.

—David Goldfarb

HDC INAUGURATES PROGRAM TO EDUCATE ELECTEDS BEFORE THEY TAKE OFFICE

"ONLY WHEN OUR POLITICAL ANALYSIS is as good as our paint analysis can we protect our pediments from politics." That conclusion was reached by the Historic Districts Council's chair emeritus Anthony C. Wood, writing in District Lines in 1992 when preservationists were still smarting from the City Council's rejection of a Jamaica Savings Bank designation. Today, 15 years later, after the rejection of *another* Jamaica Savings Bank building and of the Austin, Nichols & Company Warehouse, the treatment of historic preservation by New York's civic authorities has not changed much. Mr. Wood's suggestion on how to muster political support for preservation is still valid—by working on a political level with institutions like community boards in order to build a better-educated and activist citizenry in touch with its elected officials. The need for education and activism has not changed.

What has changed is that term limits now apply to elected municipal positions. That gives us both the opportunity and the responsibility to educate a completely new roster of elected officials every eight years.

Looking forward to the 2009 election cycle, when the mayor, the public advocate, four of the five borough presidents and potentially three quarters of the City Council will change, HDC recently began a program to reach out to newly elected officials even before they take office. Employing a questionnaire and a public forum, HDC initiated the program in

the 40th Council District in Brooklyn in November 2006, when Councilmember Yvette Clarke, who had represented the district, was elected to Congress.

The 40th District in central Brooklyn encompasses at least some of the designated historic districts of Ditmas Park, Albemarle-Kenmore Terraces, Prospect-Lefferts Gardens and Prospect Park South. It also covers most of what is commonly referred to as "Victorian Flatbush," which includes neighborhoods such as Ditmas Park West and Caton Park that are interested in becoming historic districts, and Midwood Park and Fiske Terrace, which were calendared for public hearings by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in September 2006, following an eight-year preservation campaign.

Even though she represented only part of the latter two neighborhoods, Council-member Clarke was a strong advocate for their designation. Their progress was due in no small part to her support.

Beginning shortly before the November election, when it became clear Ms. Clarke's seat would be vacant, HDC reached out to its neighborhood partners to mobilize a coalition focused on preservation and development issues. Together with the Beverly Square West Association, Caton Park Neighborhood Association, Ditmas Park Association, Ditmas Park West Neighborhood Association, Fiske Terrace Association, Flatbush Development Corporation, Lefferts Manor Association, Midwood Park Homeowners Association, Prospect Park South Association and West Midwood Community Association, HDC organized the Coalition of Concerned Preservation Voters in the 40th District and prepared a questionnaire addressing landmarks, zoning, building-code and public-involvement issues both general and specific to the district. It was then given to all the candidates to answer. Sample questions were, "Would you support increasing City Council funding for the Landmarks Commission so that it can more actively designate new neighborhoods as well as enforce the Landmarks Law in already landmarked districts?" and "Would you push for aggressive enforcement of the current building and zoning laws to address the problem of illegal conversions of existing single- and two-family homes to use as multiple dwellings?"

Of the 11 candidates in the race, eight responded in time to publish their



CHRIS KREUSSLING, [HTTP://FLATBUSHGARDENER.BLOGSPOT.COM/](http://FLATBUSHGARDENER.BLOGSPOT.COM/)

Simeon Bankoff, executive director of HDC, left, meeting with nine candidates for the City Council seat in Brooklyn's 40th District to discuss preservation issues and how they would act on them if elected.

answers prior to the public forum, which was held on February 8, 12 days before the election. Answers ranged from full-throated agreement for preservation and contextual-zoning efforts to more cautious statements about reviewing and revising the Department of Buildings program permitting architects and engineers to approve their own work—so-called self-certification. The full questionnaire is posted on HDC's Web site at www.hdc.org.

At the public forum, more than 150 preservation-minded residents turned out despite freezing February weather to hear nine of the 11 candidates. They were Mathieu Eugene, Karlene Gordon, Gerry Hopkins, Zonobia McNally, Moe Razvi, Harry Schiffman, Wellington Sharpe, Joel Toney and Leithland Tulloch. They discussed neighborhood concerns such as downzoning and the controversial Atlantic Yards project.

Although a new election was called for April to straighten out complications stemming from residency requirements, the effort of the Coalition of Concerned Preservation Voters demonstrated that when preservationists raise their voices in an election, the candidates pay attention. And an attentive candidate is the first step toward an educated representative. 

HEARD AND, MAYBE, DESIGNATED LATER

ON ITS WAY to becoming a New York City landmark, each individual building, historic district, interior space or scenic area goes through the same process at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The steps are calendaring, public hearing, designation. An astonishing number of sites have never reached the third step, remaining instead in preservation limbo for years, even decades, as heard but not designated—HBND, for short.

Approximately 200 such items in all five boroughs are in this situation. They are religious institutions, private houses, apartment buildings and complexes, public pools, even a tree and a neon sign. The reasons for the delay vary from strong opposition by the owner, the community or a political entity to lack of community interest or support. Sometimes a building languishes because it does not have a vi-

able reuse or may not be immediately threatened. Both these conditions would reduce the urgency to designate.

In 2005 the Historic Districts Council's Designation Committee selected 21 HBND buildings to support as priorities. The list was posted on HDC's Web site, was sent to LPC and was the topic of a public lecture last summer. So far, 10 of that list have been reheard—if any heard property goes undesignated for more than three years, the Landmarks Commission insists on another public hearing before making any decision. The following six have become landmarks:

- 67 Greenwich Street, Manhattan, 2005
- Orchard Beach Bathhouse and Promenade, The Bronx, 2006
- All Saint's Church and School, Manhattan, 2007
- Drake-Dehart House, Staten Island, 2007
- St. Aloysius Church, Manhattan, 2007
- Staten Island Savings Bank, Staten Island, 2007

These are their stories:

Three public pools and play centers made it to HDC's priority list: Orchard Beach Bathhouse and Promenade and Crotona Play Center, both in The Bronx, and McCarren Play Center in Brooklyn. In 1990, hearings were held for these three complexes and eight others built by the federal Works Progress Administration and opened during the summer of 1936. Orchard Beach Bathhouse and Promenade, affectionately known as “the Bronx Riviera” with its Art Moderne-Classical style and blue terra-cotta tiles, received another hearing and was designated a landmark in June 2006 along with the Astoria Park Pool and Play Center (not on HDC's list).

McCarren, Crotona, and the other seven WPA Play Centers received a hearing in January 2007. The Department of Parks & Recreation is wholeheartedly behind their designation, but at press time it had not yet been granted.

Three early 19th century Federal row houses also made the HBND priority list.



ALL PHOTOS THIS STORY, HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

Orchard Beach Bathhouse and Promenade, affectionately known as “the Bronx Riviera,” was first heard in 1990, designated in 2006.

No. 67 Greenwich Street, a rare four-bay mansion on what was the city's prime residential street when it was built in 1811, was first heard in 1966, heard again in 1992 and finally designated in 2005. Other Federals, a group of three row houses at 94-96 Greenwich Street first heard in 1970, were heard again in January 2007 but not designated by press time. Ownership of No. 96 is in dispute. One of the purported owners, a developer, opposed designation because he was seeking to tear down the building to construct a hotel that would also encompass 98 and 100 Greenwich Street, but he promised to restore the other two, Nos. 94 and 94-1/2. Preservation groups, neighbors and building occupants—including the owner of the Pussycat Lounge at No. 96 (the other purported owner)—spoke in favor of designation.

A number of religious institutions are on HDC's list, not surprising considering their vital roles in communities and their special architectural merits. Harlem's All Saint's Church and School and St. Aloysius Church were heard in 1966 and 2004 before finally becoming landmarks in January 2007. They are the first Roman Catholic churches in the city to be landmarked in nearly 30 years.

Four other religious institutions on the priority list are still in preservation limbo. The First Reformed Church and Sunday School Chapel of College Point, Queens, an 1872 Carpenter Gothic-style building, was the subject of a public hearing in 1980. St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church, the tall, gleaming 1910 white-and-cream Spanish Baroque church on Central Avenue in

Brooklyn, was heard the same year. A very different church, a little one-story clapboard chapel built in 1734 in Elmhurst, Queens, shares a similar dilemma: Known as St. James Parish House/Old St. James Episcopal Church, it is a remnant of the area's colonial period and had a hearing in 1970 with no further follow-up. The building is now used as a community center and was recently restored. Paradoxically, the care its owners have given it may deter landmarking as LPC struggles to save buildings that are threatened.

The United Christian Evangelistic Association's church in Manhattan's



St. Barbara's Catholic Church, Brooklyn, heard in 1980 but still not designated.

Washington Heights was heard in 1970. The church was built not as a religious institution but as Loew's 175th Street Theater. Designed by Thomas W. Lamb and constructed in 1932, it is one of the finest and most exuberant former movie palaces in the city. With a profusion of surface ornament and seating for more than 3,700 people, it occupies an entire city block. Excellent stewards of this building, the church authorities have nonetheless opposed designation in the past.

The 1892 Old Calvary Cemetery Gatehouse in Queens is a turreted Queen Anne brick building whose romantic vernacular style complements the style of the cemetery, built 44 years earlier and now one of the biggest in the country. When the gatehouse was heard in 1973, the trustees of St.

Patrick's Church, owners of the cemetery, were opposed to designation.

One of the more unusual buildings on HDC's priority list is the IRT Powerhouse, which occupies the entire Manhattan block bounded by West 58th and 59th Streets and 11th and 12th Avenues. The largest powerhouse in the world when completed in 1904, it reflects the City Beautiful movement's aesthetic and is a rare example of a utilitarian design by architects McKim, Mead & White. The Beaux-Arts structure was designed to alleviate neighbors' fears of an eyesore with details such as smokestacks masquerading as classical columns. It was heard but not designated in 1990.

Two sites in The Bronx are on the priority list: the Elie Nadelman House at 4715



All Saint's Church and School in Manhattan, heard in 1966 and 2004, designated in 2007.

Independence Avenue and the Noonan Plaza Apartments on West 168th Street and Nelson Avenue. The former, heard by LPC in 1970, is a circa 1880 Andrew Jackson Downing-inspired Gothic Revival brick house. From 1920 to 1946 it was the home and studio of sculptor Elie Nadelman. The Noonan Plaza Apartments, heard in 1992, are a major example of Art Deco Mayan architecture in New York City. The seven-story building, designed by Horace Ginsbern and built in 1931, features an arched portico crowned by Mayan-style pyramids, a motif repeated in the roofline. In its 15,000-square-foot courtyard are fountains, shrubs and mosaic walkways.

On Staten Island a blizzard of development has precipitated a long-awaited flurry of landmarking. The Greek Revival 1840's Drake-Dehart House in Tottenville, heard in 1991 and 2005, was designated in 2006. The Neo-Classical 1924-25 Staten Island Savings Bank in Stapleton, heard in 1966 and 2006, was designated this year. The Rutan-Journeay House, first heard in 1991, had another public hearing in December 2006 but has not yet been designated. Other buildings on Staten Island still waiting for their second (or third) chance include Horton's Row, a group of circa 1880 row houses heard in 1991, and the Nathaniel J. Wyeth House, a circa 1850 brick house heard in 1966 and heard again on April 10 this year, more than four decades later.

The Frost Building of the S.R. Smith Infirmary (later the Staten Island Hospital), a turreted, castlelike structure called the "pride of the island" when it was



St. Aloysius Church, Manhattan, heard in 1966 and 2004, designated in 2007.

opened in 1889, was heard in 1983 and again in 1991.

With recent increased funding and staffing LPC has increased its rate of designations. A day dedicated solely to public designation hearings was held in January with much success, and another took place on April 10. With any luck, HDC's remaining list of worthy buildings heard but not designated will continue to shrink. 

HDC'S 13TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE: FOR A GREEN FUTURE, PLANT PRESERVATION

FOCUSING ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, "smart" growth and "green" buildings, the Historic Districts Council's 13th Annual Preservation Conference kicked off on Friday evening, March 9, with a party honoring the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation for how it marshalls community support to pursue preservation of its neighborhood. Fittingly, the reception took place in an historic community center in the South Village, an area below Washington Square Park on which GVSHP is concentrating.

On Saturday the keynote address (see box on page 7) and discussion panels were held at the Harold Lewis Auditorium of the Hunter College School of Social Work in Manhattan. Morning sessions might be summarized as, "Nothing is as green as old buildings."

Members of the first panel, "The Greening of Preservation," emphasized that historic buildings already have embodied energy and that to destroy them uses more energy just to get back to empty land, after which even more energy will be expended to rebuild.

One of the panelists was Stephen Goldsmith, a sculptor and co-founder of the Center for the Living City at SUNY Purchase (New York) College and also a teacher at the University of Utah's College of Architecture and Planning. He told about going to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to learn about rebuilding. While there, he saw miles of destruction and debris fields that scrap dealers were being paid to take away. He helped put together a local community organization that became the Katrina Furniture Project to make furniture of the debris, creating more jobs and a "second harvest" of materials.

Carl Elefante, a principal with Quinn Evans Architects in Washington, D.C., and its director of sustainable design, spoke next, saying that historic preservation does more than the green community does for conservation because it emphasizes building renewal. Less energy is required to rehabilitate older structures than is needed to tear them down and build anew, he said. Moreover, only a very small number of new buildings are green. According to figures he cited from the

Department of Energy, 27 percent of the existing commercial-building stock went up before 1960, 45 percent between 1960-90, and 28 percent since 1990, when green technology began to be used. Of that last group, only a very small percentage is green, which means that of the existing commercial-building stock, a negligible amount is green. He criticized modules



ALL PHOTOS THIS STORY, HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

Stephen Goldsmith, left, talked about salvaging in New Orleans. Carl Elefante stressed how building renewal contributes to conservation.



Ronald Shiffman, left, criticized the order of the development process as backward. Lisa Kersavage correlated demolitions with rezoning. Carter Craft focused on the city's waterfront.



From left, Jeffrey Kroessler, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Alex Garvin and Tony Avella at a lively final panel of the all-day conference.

such as window assemblies, saying that their components last only ten years, and since the components cannot be replaced, the windows need to be. He passed along a comment he once heard a worker say: "Anything that is maintenance-free can't be repaired."

Stephen Tilly is principal of a planning, preservation, landscape and architectural firm in Dobbs Ferry, New York, and has been involved with both preservation and sustainable design since the 1970's, including recent geothermal housing projects. Older buildings were designed to conserve energy, he said, and have such features as high ceilings, passive cooling and ventilating systems, recesses and overhangs. Optimally, designers should combine these traditional methods with such new ones as cooler-burning lamps and roof tiles that contain photoelectric cells.

In the question-and-answer session, the panelists talked about LEED, an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. LEED is a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council to establish standards for energy- and resource-efficient buildings; it issues guidelines to help architects and builders comply with them. Developers may seek certification on various levels—Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum—which will be granted depending on their degree of compliance and issued in the form of plaques. LEED also initiates legislation and seeks executive orders, resolutions and incentives throughout the United States and abroad.

After lunch a panel led by HDC board member Franny Eberhart considered "Smart(?) Growth: Brooklyn in the 21st Century" and examined current planning and preservation issues there. Recent development, such as the Atlantic Yards proposal, the new Ikea in Red Hook, the Downtown Brooklyn plan and the massive rezoning in Greenpoint-Williamsburg were discussed. Carter Craft, director of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a New York-New Jersey coalition, said we needed to take a life-cycle approach to the waterfront, one that takes into account cleansing of all waste-carrying water before it enters the rivers. This is especially important as global warming brings more rainfall that flows into bays and canals and overwhelms the system. Among several locations singled out, he mentioned that the East River is not a river at all but a

tidal strait between the Upper Bay and Long Island Sound. As such, it does not flush, and contaminants just move around in it, so it needs to be monitored. Key things to think about for the future, he said, were environmental stewardship of the water, community access to it, community-based planning, and that waterfronts open up "placemaking opportunities."

Lisa Kersavage, Kress/RFR Fellow for Historic Preservation and Public Policy at the Municipal Art Society, examined ten major rezonings in Brooklyn that the Bloomberg administration had overseen. Showing maps that illustrated greater demolition in rezoned areas, she said parts of Brooklyn have become harder to preserve because rezoning has put so much development pressure on them. In Greenpoint/Williamsburg, for instance, she said the city had identified eight known historical resources and 12 potential ones. MAS in its own survey identified 264 potential historic resources, including 1850's workers' housing, churches and factories. In the future, historic resources must be identified *before* zoning changes are proposed, she urged, and the Landmarks Preservation Commission should act to protect them before zoning changes are enacted. Twenty-two acres of Red Hook were rezoned to allow an Ikea big-box store there, and Ikea has begun to fill in a graving dock in continuous use despite legal action by MAS to save it. Environmental-review laws exist, she reminded her listeners: "Politicians can withhold permits, and we need to insist that they do it."

Another panelist, Ronald Shiffman, was honored last year by the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects for his contributions to affordable housing. He is a 45-year veteran of city planning who specializes in innovative community-based financing and planning. He said Brooklyn is booming because of its diversity of people, uses and building types. He decried the Atlantic Yards development, saying that if land is publicly owned, the public should be engaged in planning before it is brought to the developer and that there should not be one developer in a project of that size but a dozen. Many neighbors of the project sold out because they were afraid they would lose their property to eminent domain. "You don't take private land and give it to private developers," Mr. Shiff-

PRESERVATION IS SUSTAINABILITY: KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY DONOVAN RYPKEMA

TAKING A STAND INFREQUENTLY HEARD in discussions about sustainable development, Donovan Rypkema argued that one of its most effective components is historic preservation. Maintaining, adapting, and reusing older buildings conserves land and natural materials, he said, contributes to local economies and preserves cultural patrimony in a way that technology alone cannot.

Mr. Rypkema is principal of PlaceEconomics in Washington, D.C., a firm that advises clients on commercial-area revitalization and the reuse of historic structures both in this country and abroad. He is the author of numerous publications and the classic guide "The Economics of Historic Preservation," and teaches a graduate course on that subject at the University of Pennsylvania.

In his opening speech at the Historic Districts Council's conference, Mr. Rypkema stressed that sustainable development is crucial for economic competitiveness, that new "green" buildings are part of but not synonymous with sustainable development, and that historic preservation has a central and vital role to play.

Sustainable development is a principle used to satisfy a community's demands without using up nonrenewable resources or compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Environmental protection, economic growth and socio-cultural enhancement are all tenets of sustainable development.

Citing an example of how preservation contributes to sustainable development, he noted that in older houses wood windows are often replaced with aluminum or vinyl to conserve heat. But most heat is lost through the attic or through uninsulated walls, not through windows, he said, and fiberglass insulation in the attic is more effective as an energy saver than are new windows. Moreover, he said, nearly a third of the windows being replaced each year are less than ten years old, and the energy consumed in manufacturing them is 40 times (vinyl) to 126 times (aluminum) that used for wood. Once they are scrapped, the landfill space the old windows take, to say nothing of the energy consumed getting them there, compounds the waste.

Economic development is also aided by historic preservation because instead of supplying the market with new goods brought in from great distances, it relies on local workers to rehabilitate existing properties. And, as he noted, "the plumber gets a haircut on the way home, buys groceries and joins the YMCA—each recirculating that paycheck within the community."

With a battery of statistics, Mr. Rypkema made the point that rehabilitation of historic buildings generates more jobs, more income and more state and local taxes than building new ones does. And well-maintained historic neighborhoods attract people who want to visit—tourists—as well as live there, bringing social and economic diversity uncommon in newer areas.

In his conclusion, Mr. Rypkema said, "Sustainability means stewardship. There can be no sustainable development without a central role for historic preservation."



man said. Speaking of the development process in general, he noted that we now have environmental reviews at the end of the process, whereas we need planning first so we can build without displacing jobs or homes. We need job opportunities

and manufacturing jobs that help create a diverse economy, not just a service economy. We need a mix of places to live and work, and we need to rethink density. Production and residential facilities can now be next door to each other, he pointed

out, because now many manufacturing operations—printing, for example—have become “clean.”

The final panel did not address the question in its title, “The Future of New York: With Preservation or Without?” but in lively exchanges summed up the issues earlier panels treated. Starting off the discussion, moderator Roberta Brandes Gratz, a commissioner at the Landmarks Preservation Commission and an award-winning writer and lecturer on many urban issues, wondered whether success in preservation could be its undoing and observed that “people who opposed historic preservation in the 1970’s and ’80’s are now making money on it.”

City Councilmember Tony Avella, who has represented northeast Queens since 2001 and is chair of the Council’s Zoning and Franchises Committee, spoke next. A strong supporter of community-based preservation efforts and lead sponsor of the 2005 “Demolition by Neglect” legislation, he said that the system is still geared to developers and development. “We let the real estate industry do the planning ... Planning and preservation should be one and the same and should be from the bottom up, but planners at the top won’t let that happen. It shouldn’t be such a battle for us. We’re trying to save a way of life for the future—everybody has a stake in preserving their neighborhood.”

Alex Garvin took a more controversial, less preservation-friendly position

than most panelists. Mr. Garvin heads his own planning and real estate consulting firm specializing in the development of the public realm. He was a member of the City Planning Commission for nine years and admitted that the city has made mistakes, that planning has not adequately served the city’s needs. However, he worried about the costs of preservation and even its extent. Preservation decisions should be guided by historic significance, he said, such as the Liberty Bell; by aesthetic prominence, such as the University of Virginia (he asked whether we were “cheapening” designations by adding too many); by social/cultural significance, such as the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (but not too many tenements); and by public spaces such as Yosemite National Park (but not all parks).

In one of the more surprising moments of the conference, Mr. Garvin said that one third of Staten Island had been downzoned and that, in his view, it had to do with keeping people out. “I’m surprised the NAACP has not brought suit,” he declared. Councilmember Tony Avella countered that at least in Queens, minority groups were *asking* for downzoning. HDC vice president and historian Jeffrey Kroessler said he was “tired of affordable housing being an albatross around the neck of historic preservation.”

Ms. Gratz rejoined by saying that historic districts are more diverse than new areas, which are built for the rich or the poor. She next asked the others to comment on the future of manufacturing zones. “We have light manufacturing,” she said. “We now have furniture manufacturing, lighting, stage production companies. Small manufacturing has allowed us to ride the volatility of economic conditions.”

She was joined in that sentiment by Julia Vitullo-Martin, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and director of the Center for Rethinking Development, who said that New York City was now healthy and strong. “New York in time of growth is amazingly resilient,” she said. “I fear for New York in hard times.”

As a final event for the weekend, on Sunday, walking tours took people to parts of the city discussed by the panels: Downtown Brooklyn; Times Square, Manhattan (new “green” buildings); St. George, Staten Island; Downtown Jamaica, Queens; the East Village, Manhattan; and Red Hook, Brooklyn. 

DISTRICT PROFILES

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT, MANHATTAN

LOUIS MORINO, THE PROPRIETOR of Sloppy Louie’s Restaurant at Fulton and South Streets in Manhattan, was talking about his building to the writer Joseph Mitchell. It was 1952, and Mitchell was working on what became the title story of his collection of *The New Yorker* stories, “Up in the Old Hotel.” Louie, who was not sloppy at all but came by the name from the previous owner of his restaurant, learned about his building from a title searcher at Title Guarantee & Trust Company, saying that other sources had not yielded much information about its history. “It seems all this end of South Street used to be under water,” he told Mitchell. “The East River flowed over it. Then the city filled it in and divided it into lots. In February 1804 a merchant by the name of Peter Schermerhorn, a descendant of Jacob Schermerhorn, was given grants to the lot my building now stands on—92 South—and the lot next to it—93 South, a corner lot, the corner of South and Fulton. ... Schermerhorn put up a four-story brick-and-frame building on each of these lots—stores on the street floors and flats above.”

Cut to the Landmarks Preservation Commission’s designation report (1977) of the South Street Seaport Historic District: “In 1868, Nos. 92 and 93 were raised from four to six stories and topped by a mansard roof with gabled dormers. This alteration was made for John H. McKinley, who began running his steamboat hotel at No. 93 (also 2 Fulton) in this same year.”

Back to Louis Morino: “They [Nos. 92 and 93] were designed so they could be used as one building—there’s a party wall between them, and in those days there were sets of doors on each floor leading from one building to the other. ... The name of the hotel was the Fulton Ferry Hotel. ... At that time, there were passenger-line steamship docks all along South Street, lines that went to every part of the world, and out-of-town people waiting for passage on the various steamers would stay at the Fulton Ferry Hotel.

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Also, the Brooklyn Bridge hadn't yet been built, and the Fulton Ferry was the principal ferry to Brooklyn, and the ferryhouse stood directly in front of the hotel. On account of the ferry, Fulton Street was like a funnel; damned near everything headed for Brooklyn went through it. It was full of foot traffic and horse-drawn traffic day and night, and South and Fulton was one of the most ideal saloon corners in the city."

Another thing the designation report says was that people who built on landfill normally built only one story first, then waited a year before putting up the rest of the building so that the structure could settle and compact the fill. Schermerhorn, however, was eager to get on with his project and erected the whole four stories at once, and today, 200 years later, the wisdom of waiting is still evident on the upstairs floors now occupied by the South Street Seaport Museum—they are slanted enough to induce seasickness.

At one time water lots abounded. During the early 17th century when the Dutch owned New York, they laid claim to the land under water near the shore. According to Jack Putnam, historian at the South Street Seaport Museum, they

realized that because Manhattan was surrounded by water, its promise lay in trade, not agriculture or manufacturing. That meant improvement to accommodate shipping and docks. Landfill, bulkheads, piers would all be necessary. Clever fellows, the Dutch sold to individuals who agreed to fill in the land themselves—often with palisades of pilings filled in with rubble—and then built on top of it, building out into the river little by little. The practice continued into the 18th, 19th and even 20th centuries.

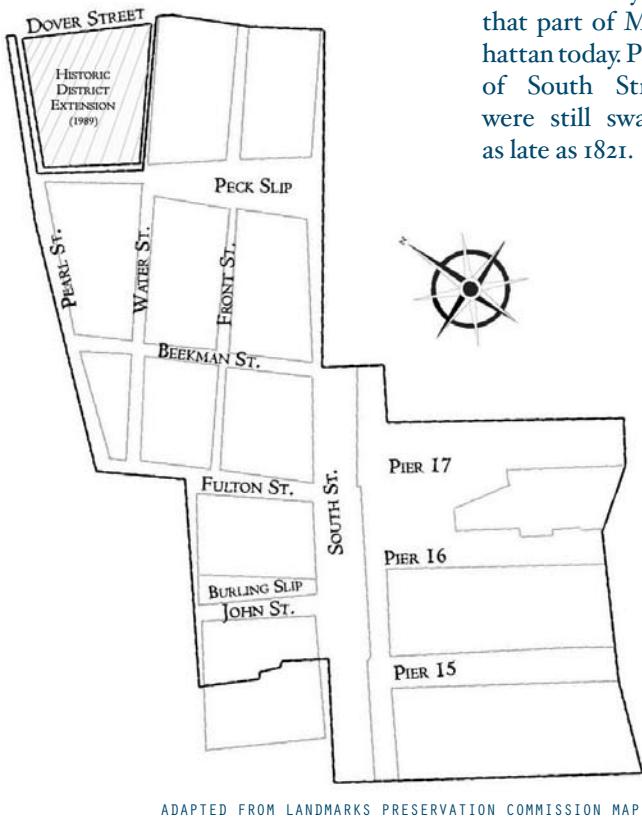
This was true on both sides of Manhattan, but according to the designation report, in the earliest days the southeastern shore was seen as the natural harbor both because a rocky ledge protruded from the western shore and also because the East River was narrower than the Hudson, providing better shelter for the small ships of the time.

Originally the eastern shoreline was Pearl Street, called Queen Street at the time. Then, by the end of the 18th century, landfill took it to Water Street, then to Front Street and finally, in the early 19th century, to South Street, which is the eastern boundary of that part of Manhattan today. Parts of South Street were still swampy as late as 1821.

Under the Dutch, the port prospered, but by the time of the Revolution its wharves could no longer compete with the better-maintained ones of Boston, Philadelphia and Charleston. Following the 1776 Battle of Long Island, the British occupied the port. When they left in 1783, taking many Tory merchants with them, the seaport fell on hard times and did not fully recover for another 15 years.

The designation report again: "Between 1820 and 1860, five and one half million alien passengers came to the U.S., and more arrived at the South Street Seaport piers than at any other port of entry. This flood of immigration brought the fear of disease to the seaport, and a number of cholera and yellow-fever epidemics paralyzed the business of the area. Hotels and boardinghouses were opened in the district during the 1850's to accommodate this transient population as well as the many overseas merchants."

Mr. Putnam said of life in the neighborhood at the time, "Water Street came to be known as the Wickedest Ward in New



VIRGINIA PARKHOUSE

Above, 92 and 93 Front Street, once the Fulton Ferry Hotel, later Sloppy Louie's Restaurant, now another restaurant downstairs and galleries of the South Street Seaport Museum upstairs. Left, map showing the boundaries and streets of the historic district, designated in 1977 and 1989.

York, with blood sports, dives, brothels, gambling joints"—all the accouterments, in fact, of a thriving seaport. These criminal elements co-existed side by side with more prosperous, legally conducted business, just as they have in New York in later decades. In fact, the earliest extant house in the district, the charming three-story brick at 273 Water Street, has some of that history. Built for sea captain Joseph Rose in 1773, the house was rented out by him, according to the designation report, and at one point "was operated as a small hotel and saloon famed for its staged rat fights"—probably one of the blood sports Mr. Putnam was referring to.

By the 1850's steamships began to replace clipper ships. Faster and more predictable than sailing ships, they also needed deeper and wider waters than the East River offers, and so the Hudson River became the port of choice, its rocky ledges presumably having been dealt with. That was when the fishing industry began to move in, and for more than 100 years it dominated the South Street Seaport, providing seafood for the entire booming city, to say nothing of such institutions as Sloppy Louie's Restaurant.

Vital as a thriving fish market can be, it has its downside—the smell—and partly because of that, other commerce lagged, buildings deteriorated. In the 1960's the area was scheduled for demolition when a private group of history buffs stepped in wanting to save it as an example of early commercial New York. They established the South Street Seaport Museum in 1967 as the vehicle to do that, envisioning a 19th century sailing-ship district complete with piers accessible to old ships. They acquired a number of ships and buildings, but it became apparent that their project could not be self-supporting, and the buildings were ultimately taken over by the New York City Economic Development Corporation, which did a leaseback



P. BAREAU

The only frame house extant in the district, this one at 279 Water Street, corner of Dover, is thought to have been built in 1801. Because of fire hazards, frame buildings were banned in the late 1820's. Many on the filled land of Water Street were allowed because brick was considered too heavy a material for landfill.

to the City of New York.

In the early 1980's the EDC invited the Rouse Company to come in, a company that had started by developing suburban and interstate malls but made its reputation with so-called festival marketplaces such as Faneuil Hall in Boston and Baltimore's Harborplace. Rouse agreed to build a commercial mall with architecture appropriate to the scale, style and feeling of the 19th century seaport. It was called the South Street Seaport Marketplace. Later Rouse dismantled Piers 17 and 18 and constructed a new one with a pavilion for

public gatherings and performances. The noisy and sometimes boisterous crowds generated by these attractions created security problems for the shops and other businesses that occupied the seaport, and some of them closed. As an entertainment district, the seaport could not compete with Madison Square Garden or countless other venues in Manhattan, and its vitality began to wane. By 2004, Rouse sold its assets, splitting them between the city and a private real estate partnership that, like all occupants of the market, are today tenants of the city.

And the next year, 2005, the Fulton Fish Market moved to The Bronx.

Approached from the west by Fulton Street, the South Street Seaport leaps out visually from the tall, modern buildings that frame it. Three Greek Revival warehouses built together in 1835-36 are warm, pale red-brick buildings, substantial but low-rise, on the left. On the right ahead are the Schermerhorn Row counting houses designed in the Georgian-Federal style and built in 1811, one of the finest vistas of 19th century architecture in the city. At the end of the street is the river, its docks and its ships with their picturesque rigging. And there's the sky, too, a rare sight in Manhattan.

People live in the district. They always have, but not in the same degree of comfort they can expect today. Older buildings are being renovated with sensitivity and imagination; one of them was done so appealingly that House & Garden gave it nine pages in its January 2007 issue.

More people are expected to move in. To give you an idea what kind, recently the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation applied to LPC for approval to construct a playground in Burling Slip. Permission was granted. A park was proposed for Peck Slip. That decision is pending. 

RECENT GIFTS AND GRANTS

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS by government, foundations, organizations, companies and Friends of the Historic Districts Council are very much appreciated. Many thanks to those who gave in the period from December 2006 through February 2007:

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P. BUREAU

Rigging on the sailing ship Peking anchored at the South Street Seaport Historic District.

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