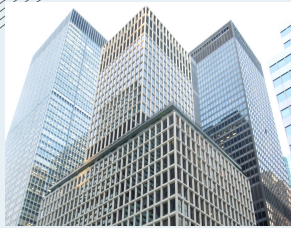


# DISTRICT LINES

NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



**p1 PRESERVATION UNDER ATTACK! THE CITIZENS AND CITY HALL: A NEW DAY?**

**p2 NOTHING WORTH SAVING IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN— REALLY?**

**p4 THE GARMENT DISTRICT: UNIQUE AND UNPROTECTED SKYSCRAPER FACTORIES**

**p5 “VALUE(S)” IN AN HISTORIC DISTRICT: A DEVELOPER’S PERSPECTIVE**

**p6 PRESERVATION PLATFORM OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL**

## **PRESERVATION UNDER ATTACK! THE CITIZENS AND CITY HALL: A NEW DAY?**

By Françoise Bollack, HDC Board President

New York, the city we love, has never been more cherished and it has never been more at risk: in the midst of great urban success, the soul of the city is now for sale. The allure of New York City’s global branding and the mirage of “world cities” should not make us forget that life is lived in specific places, not in the imagination of ad men or in the aspirations of globe-trotting politicians. We are here, now, in this particular place, and more than ever, to paraphrase Candide, we need to tend to this particular garden. Not surprisingly, it’s the people from the neighborhoods who are fighting the hardest for the soul of the city.

The Landmarks Law will be 50 years old in 2015, and over the past few years we have seen New York’s citizens rise up, time and time again, fighting to protect their neighborhoods and preserve their particular sense of place, their buildings and their open spaces. More than ever, we have learned that we help form the places where we live and work and that those places, in turn, form us.

The residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn have worked for years to research and survey their neighborhood’s history and architecture while organizing to make the case for landmark protection. It was a long battle, a citizens’ battle. The same happened on West End Avenue in Manhattan, a very different area with its own distinct aura. Both efforts met with success in 2013, when the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designated portions of each as historic districts with the promise of more to come. These are only two of many similar battles throughout the city, waged by citizens who want to have a say in the future of their own place. These are deliberate, thoughtful, communal acts of self-determination.

Unfortunately, the preservation movement’s successes are causing a backlash from powerful real estate, institutional and political forces, which feel threatened by this citizens’ movement. Instead of welcoming public efforts as a contribution to a deliberative, democratic planning process, these professional speculators see preservation efforts as a threat to their desire to develop as they please. It is a campaign that is assaulting dozens of neighborhoods throughout the city, but looking at some of the “big ticket” items is illustrative.

In 2013, the Midtown East Rezoning proposal was aggressively pushed by Mayor Bloomberg, who wanted to see it approved by the end of his third term. This rushed, rather under-studied proposal would have doubled the allowable square footage on certain sites around Grand Central Terminal and increased the allowable square footage by 60 percent on most other sites, and it met with vigorous opposition from several Manhattan community boards - citizens again! Community Boards 1, 4, 5 and 6—with the approval of Community Boards 2, 7 and 8—formed an unprecedented coalition, under the leadership of Community Board 5’s Lola Finkelstein, to study the proposal and evaluate its merits. They found little to like in its lack of planning for infrastructure, transportation or open spaces, and in its lack of concern for historic buildings. The Historic Districts Council mobilized a task force of experts who walked the area, identified 33 buildings and submitted detailed Requests for Evaluation for those buildings to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Ultimately the rezoning proposal was defeated at the City Council – but make no mistake about it, it will come back. Let us hope that this rather passé version of urban renewal has seen its last days and that the new mayor and his new Department of City Planning are ready to embrace a more nuanced, holistic approach to planning – not one that is reduced to its absolute lowest denominator: the dumb Floor Area Ratio.

*Continued on Page 7*

# PRESERVATION NOW!

## Today's Victories, Losses and Ongoing Battles

*The articles in this issue of District Lines are drawn from presentations given at HDC's 2013 Annual Preservation Conference. Despite past and current victories, the battle to preserve our built heritage is ongoing and must be waged on several fronts, especially given the recent complete turnover in New York City government. We invite you to join us in learning from the lessons of past battles and in working with HDC in the campaigns currently being waged.*

## NOTHING WORTH SAVING IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN—REALLY?

Based on a presentation by Kerri Culhane, HDC Director; architectural historian

The recently shelved proposal by the Department of City Planning endeavored to up-zone a huge chunk of Manhattan's Midtown East (587 buildings on 78 blocks from 39th to 57th Streets) and to dramatically change the look and feel of the area by substantially increasing the allowable height (in some places doubling it) and bulk of new buildings. The fundamental questions, for this and any wholesale zoning change, should be: "Would this change be for the better?" and "Is this really necessary?"

The core of Midtown East is Grand Central Terminal and the historic Terminal City, a cohesive ensemble of hotels, clubs and office buildings dating to the first quarter of the 20th century. The area proposed for rezoning also includes important mid-century buildings unprotected by landmark designation. The year 2013 was the 100th anniversary of the opening of Grand Central Terminal, so it is ironic for the city to embark on an initiative that threatens the integrity of this iconic landmark that preservationists fought to protect all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Bloomberg administration was intent on fast-tracking this proposal in order to codify the zoning change by the time the mayor left office in December 2013. Thankfully, elected officials, community boards and preservation organizations questioned its thoroughness and maturity. In its 12-year tenure, the Bloomberg administration aggressively up-zoned neighborhoods across the city, pushing through approximately 116 rezonings citywide. In the summer of 2012 City Planning approached the local community boards and let it be known that the agency wanted to move this proposal quickly. Soon after, the Historic Districts Council's board and staff started to assess what is actually in this area, to inform City Planning's scoping documents and identify potential landmarks and buildings at risk.

Around the core of Grand Central, the Floor Area Ratio (FAR - the ratio of the site area to total building square footage) would have increased from 15 to 24, a 62 percent hike. Qualifying sites would have been required to be a minimum 25,000 square feet in area with

full-block frontage; nevertheless, a 62 percent increase in allowable square footage would put many existing buildings at risk because the incentive to assemble small lots into a qualifying lot would be significant. In addition to the new increased as-of-right framework, a special permit would increase the FAR around Grand Central Terminal to 30—a 100 percent increase—resulting in buildings taller than the MetLife Building behind it.

This gross inflation of the FAR simply amounts to freeing land to build taller and bigger buildings, and it puts many important existing buildings at risk of demolition. Is this for the better? Why is this necessary? City Planning's theory was that the age of building stock and the lack of new construction in Midtown East hampered the neighborhood's ability to attract new businesses; underpinning this argument was the assertion that New York must remain competitive with Shanghai, London, Tokyo, etc., and that new office buildings in Midtown would achieve that goal. In fact, the Midtown East Rezoning could be interpreted as a way of fostering a speculative boom in advance of the coming of Second Avenue subway and the extension of the No. 7 subway line.

Because a huge burden would be placed on the area's infrastructure if the bulk were increased, City Planning's proposal included the creation of a fund into which developers would pay to underwrite improvements. This was almost universally criticized as being backwards: improvements to public transportation and streetscape need to occur *before* development, not after, when more people by the thousands would be expected to flood into the area. Looking at how much new infrastructure would be required to support this influx of new workers and residents (subway capacity, subway stairwell capacity, sidewalk capacity, bus and other surface transportation), the math didn't exactly work.

Shortly after the announcement of City Planning's intentions for Midtown East in summer 2012, HDC formed a task force to study the area. The surprising discovery was that the area is vibrant at all hours and occupied by a great variety of building types and uses: glass mid-century office buildings, imposing Terminal City brick and stone buildings, early-20th-century terra-cotta-clad lofts, a striking neo-Gothic institutional building, and also former townhouses and rowhouses that support many quality of life amenities, including small businesses, residences, restaurants, bars and social clubs. The HDC task force identified 33 landmark-worthy buildings and then researched and wrote Requests for Evaluation for each of those

HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

### NYC Landmark Recommendations East Midtown Rezoning Area April 2013

**Residential**

- 1 Mirne Young Residence, 17 E 24th St, Hiss & Wickes, 1899
- 2 Martin Edman Residence (now First's Club), 57 E 59th St, Blair & Oak, 1908-09
- 3 Robert L. & Mary Schickly Residence, 39 E 51st St, Turk & Sawyer, 1902-3
- 4 417 Park Avenue, Emory Roth, 1917

**Hotels**

- 1 Hotel Barenz, 125 E 50th St, Emory Roth & Shain, 1926-27
- 2 Shelton Hotel, 525 Lexington Ave, Arthur Lorenz-Harmon, 1922-23
- 3 Lexington Hotel, 507 Lexington Ave, Schube & Wiese, 1928-29
- 4 Roosevelt Hotel, 45 E 45th St, George & Ross, 1925

**Institutional**

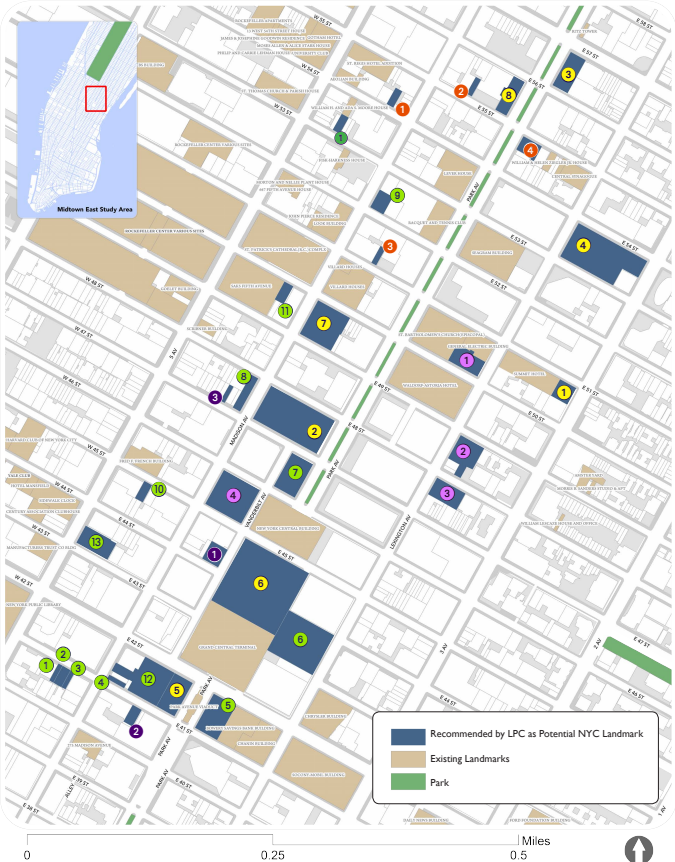
- 1 30 Vanderbilt Ave, James Gordon Riggs, 1915
- 2 30-32 E 41st St, Turk & Sawyer, 1912
- 3 17 E 47th, Henry Clay Chapman, 1912

**Landscapes**

- 1 Flower Park, 3 E 53rd Street, Zorn & Beers, 1907

**Pre-War Commercial/Office Buildings**

- 1 American Encaustic Tile Company Showroom, 16 E 41st St, Rin & Matthews, 1922
- 2 18-20 E 41st St, George & Edward Blum, 1912
- 3 22-24 E 41st St, George & Edward Blum, 1912-14
- 4 399 Madison Ave, Hill & Stone, 1912-13



**Pre-War Commercial/Office Buildings**

- 1 Herald Square Building, 100 E 42nd St, Turk & Sawyer, 1914-23
- 2 Chrysler Building, 405 Lexington Ave, Sloan & Robertson, 1927
- 3 Midtown Building, 250 Park Ave, Cross & Cross, 1923
- 4 400 Madison Ave, H.C. Craig Swainson, 1929
- 5 550 Madison Ave, Robert D. Kahn & Frank E. Vitell, 1929
- 6 The Commodore Hotel, 6 E 45th St, John Mead Howells, 1925
- 7 18-20 E 40th St, Row & Goldstone, 1915
- 8 Lincoln Building, 60 E 42nd St, J.C. Carpenter, 1929-30
- 9 Lullwater National Building, 519 Fifth Ave, Steven Lantz & Harmon, 1929

**Post-War Commercial/Office Buildings**

- 1 United Nations Secretariat Building, 270 Park Ave, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Gordon Bunshaft & Wallace de Bary, designed 1955, built 1957-60, Built FAR: 16.82 (21.4)
- 2 145 Park Ave, Kahn & Jacobs, 1946-47, Built FAR: 17.5 (21.4)
- 3 110 Park Ave, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Gordon Bunshaft & Wallace de Bary, designed 1955, built 1957-60, Built FAR: 16.82 (21.4)
- 4 110 Park Ave, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Gordon Bunshaft & Wallace de Bary, designed 1955, built 1957-60, Built FAR: 16.82 (21.4)
- 5 Philip Harris, 120 Park Ave, Leitch Friedman & Associates, 1982
- 6 Pan Am/Par Lab, 200 Park Ave, Emory Roth & Sons, Peter Bakula & Walter Gropius, 1963
- 7 137 Madison Ave, Emory Roth & Sons, 1967
- 8 INTERIOR: Hoffman News Display Room, 430 Park Ave, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1954

Historic Districts Council Midtown East task force map of the landmark-worthy buildings within the New York City Department of City Planning’s proposed Midtown East Rezoning area. In April 2013 the Historic Districts Council endorsed the Landmarks Preservation Commission’s considered buildings, which are shown on this map. To view in greater detail and for more information, please visit <http://hdc.org/east-midtown-rezoning-map>.

structures. The task force also mapped the area to understand the overall patterns of the zoning changes and the landmark-worthy buildings (including potential designated historic districts). These findings were released in January 2013.

In late February 2013 the Landmarks Preservation Commission itself released a list of the buildings under consideration for protection that included two-thirds of the buildings recommended by the HDC task force. By contrast, the Real Estate Board of New York commissioned a study of the area, classifying every non-landmarked building as either a placeholder or a leftover. Unsurprisingly, REBNY found zero potential landmarks in this entire 78-block area.

Some of what REBNY considers leftovers, we consider fine landmark-quality buildings. The Grand Central area has a range of architecture extending from the pre-Terminal City era up through the really interesting and diverse corporate modernism era—such as the buildings that form the Park Avenue streetscape north of Grand Central that is known worldwide. There are residential buildings, including what is now the Friars Club. There is a great grouping of hotels servicing people coming into the area from Grand Central, a testament to the growth of the Terminal City area. There is a great variety of institutional buildings, including the neo-Gothic New York Bible Society, the refined Adamesque Brook Club, and the Renaissance Revival

Chemists Club. Pre-war masonry commercial office buildings are an essential counterpoint to the post-war glass and steel commercial office buildings in Midtown East. A number of both pre-war and post-war commercial buildings made it onto the Landmarks Preservation Commission list.

In late 2013 the widely panned City Planning proposal for Midtown East was soundly defeated when the City Council rejected it during its mandatory Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) process. By that late date in the Bloomberg administration, it may be that many in the City Council were fatigued by the mayor’s relentless, largely unquestioned rezonings or simply alarmed by the administration’s insistence on fast-tracking a poorly planned proposal.

A growing body of evidence suggests that new, hip and creative businesses, including the technology start-ups so prized by the Bloomberg administration as representing the future of New York in the global economy, actually prefer the scale, texture and architectural distinctiveness of older buildings as well as their connection to the street. When we see examples such as the restoration and improvement of 285 Madison Avenue, a 1920s office building at East 40th Street, it looks as if the area is already being upgraded without having to be up-zoned. \*

## THE GARMENT DISTRICT: UNIQUE AND UNPROTECTED SKYSCRAPER FACTORIES

Based on a presentation by Andrew S. Dolkart, HDC Adviser; Director, Historic Preservation Program, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

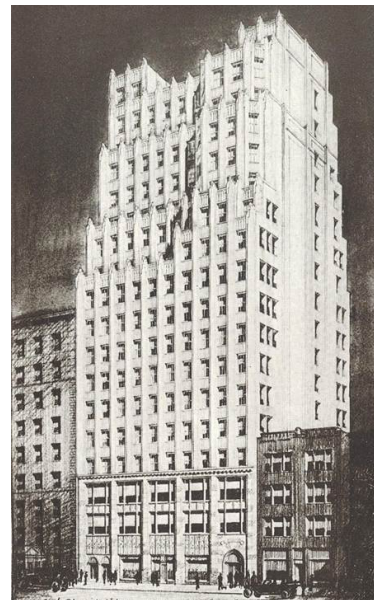
Between 1920 and 1928, approximately 130 enormous high-rise manufacturing and showroom buildings were erected on the west side of Midtown Manhattan, between 35th and 41st Streets, Sixth and Ninth Avenues, for the garment trade. With an unprecedented amount of square footage, this dense concentration of loft buildings creates a spectacular high-rise industrial complex unique in the world. Truly, here the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, as the district is the largest concentration of skyscraper factories anywhere in the world. Yet there is no preservation campaign to save the Garment District, at least not in the typical grassroots, neighborhood-based sense. There is a campaign to preserve garment manufacturing in the area, but not a campaign for the buildings where this manufacturing takes place or at least took place in the past. Virtually nothing has been written about the physical fabric of the Garment District, and even the *AIA Guide to New York City* does not mention a single Garment District building. The only substantive architectural history of the area is a forthcoming book by Andrew S. Dolkart.

According to Dolkart, in the early years of the 20th century the ladies' garment manufacturers decided that the blocks north of Pennsylvania Station were most appropriate for their businesses. Here real estate was relatively cheap, since most buildings in what was then known as the Tenderloin were deteriorated rowhouses and tenements. In December 1919 a cooperative syndicate of manufacturers of suits, cloaks and dresses announced they would build the Garment Center Capitol, two loft structures on the west side of Seventh Avenue flanking West 37th Street. The Garment Center Capitol buildings were designed by little-known architect Walter Mason; they are rather innocuous works of architectural design, despite contemporary descriptions of their "Italian Renaissance" facades. The Garment Center Capitol was designed to be the most efficient garment manufacturing and showroom complex in the world, as well as a pair of buildings that would save the manufacturers money. Yet the Garment Center Capitol is of major historical importance in the development of New York and the garment industry, and definitely merits landmark status for cultural and historical significance.

The loft buildings comprising the Garment District are a unique building type with specific characteristics brought on by the needs of the industry and newly adopted city regulations. First, all had to conform to the 1916 Zoning Law. The zoning rules governing height and setback were promulgated to regulate the design of office skyscrapers, but in fact it was the physical form of the Garment District that was most affected by these regulations. Zoning required setbacks as

the building rose in height, and naturally each builder wanted the maximum allowable floor space under this code. However, different configurations were possible, so no two buildings look alike. Each building generally has a two- or three-story base of stone and iron, with large shop windows and modest ornament. The highly visible lower floors commanded especially high rents from wholesale dealers in textiles or buttons and from luncheonettes and other businesses catering to the garment trade and its workers. Above the storefronts were brick facades with cascading setbacks. These street facades and the rear elevations were articulated by enormous multi-pane windows maximizing light and ventilation.

As a group, the buildings of the Garment District are of crucial importance in the history of labor, in the history of manufacturing, and in the history of architecture and development as well. Builders and manufacturers created a singular type of high-rise urban industrial building in the Garment District. Although the industrial activity has declined, the physical form of the district is unchanged from the 1920s. This unique concentration of high-rise factories, a form found nowhere else in the world, certainly meets the criteria for historic district designation. We can think of few areas in New York City



Sketch of 247-255 West 38th Street, designed by George and Edward Blum, from *The Work of George & Edward Blum Architects New York City* (1925)

with a greater sense of place, which is the defining idea in the Landmarks Law for what makes a historic district. When you're in this area, you know you're in it.

Why is it that these buildings, contained within a district so engrained in the history of the city, are so widely ignored? We believe it is because they are vernacular buildings, not great architectural masterworks, and most of them were designed by architects who are not very well known. These are also working buildings, where the forms of the architecture can get lost in the bustle of businesses running through them. In fact, this vitality is a testament to their significance – these are buildings that truly work, and the distinctiveness of the

neighborhood is not going unnoticed by an influx of new tenants from media, advertising, entertainment, technology and other non-garment industries. The loft-type former factories and showrooms with high ceilings and concrete floors appeal to businesses that “don’t want to buy in just a glass box,” notes the Center for an Urban Future, a research group.

With the present zoning, few of the loft buildings are vulnerable to demolition. The threats are more incremental, specifically the loss of windows and entranceways being “modernized.” More importantly, the area could be rezoned to encourage even higher density, especially as West Midtown continues to grow and develop. As this is an area with no native watchdog, it could easily be targeted for inappropriate development. The solution would be to place preservation protections on the neighborhood now, to help guide the future development of this historic area in a way that respects its past while planning for the city’s future. \*

## “VALUE(S)” IN AN HISTORIC DISTRICT: A DEVELOPER’S PERSPECTIVE

Based on a presentation by Donald Brennan, HDC Adviser; Founder, Brennan Real Estate, LLC

As a broker and developer in Brownstone Brooklyn, I regularly see the pressures of real estate transactions in the neighborhoods where I work. My view might differ from that of most developers: I embrace preservation. A long-term holistic view of our built heritage is that it should add value and pull communities together, as opposed to the shortsighted near-term gain that might be had by rejecting preservation and looking at every development opportunity as a one-off.

My sister used to rent the upper floor of a modern building on Henry Street in Carroll Gardens. I would stand at that window and look

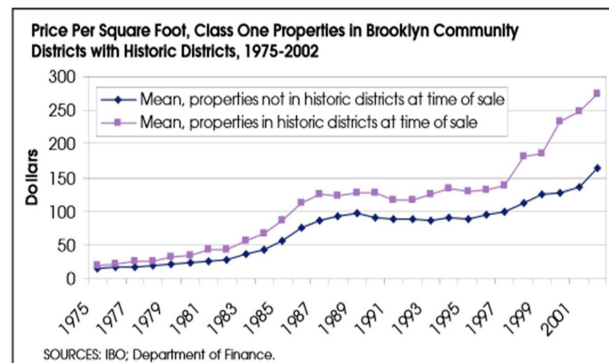


A brownstone streetscape in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn.

down that beautiful block of historic buildings and say, “Oh my goodness, I feel sorry for the people living in those buildings looking back at our building.” That’s not meant to be offensive to the people who

built the plain structure, but when you put these two building types right up against each other, there is a jarring juxtaposition of new and old, undesirable and desirable. That is part of the equation for me as to where value is, what’s worthwhile, and how to maintain future long-term value for a community. Value is not merely about individual gain; it is about how the collective community is going to be better off in the long run.

The New York City Independent Budget Office issued a report on property values in and adjacent to designated historic districts in 2003. It was commissioned by the New York City Council to look into whether there was any evidence that historic district designation had constrained the appreciation in residential property values. The



Graph produced as part of the NYC Independent Budget Office’s 2003 study on the impact of historic districts on real estate values.

report looked at Brooklyn, which had the largest percentage of one-, two- and three-family homes, Class 1 sales, between 1975 and 2002. They looked at 31,000 sales, of which there were just under 4,000 in six historic districts, to see what impact historic districting had on real estate values. Based on information from Park Slope, Fort Greene and Stuyvesant Heights, the market value of the properties in historic districts was notably higher than those outside historic districts for every year in the 22-year study.

That’s only the starting point for my perspective on why landmark designation should be pursued; my ultimate approach is about the downside of *not* protecting historic neighborhoods. A homeowner is at serious risk of seeing real estate values reduced if there isn’t some layer of protection. What is the real cost of preserving a home and adhering to certain guidelines, versus the downside? The downside is that individual or multiple-unit houses that contribute to a community could, at worst, be taken down. In such cases, the property value is a developer’s value, which is much less than what a homeowner would pay as the highest and best use for a piece of real estate. There’s a substantial difference in those values. If you’re willing to move forward and expose your property to some scenario where a developer comes along and buys it, you’re going to get less than another homeowner who takes it over either for use as a single-family home or as the resident owner of a multi-family with rental units. They get utility out of that space and will pay more for it than a developer would.

*Continued on Page 6*

Is there a downside to landmark designation? What is the cost of that? The cost that I hear about most often is the cost of maintenance and improvements in a landmarked neighborhood. There is some truth to that. Typical elements in a home that needs repair are the windows and doors, and those are under some fairly strict Landmarks Preservation Commission guidelines. However, the cost of having to use a certain type of window is worthwhile insurance to make sure that my neighbor doesn't let his property devolve, or turn around and sell his building to somebody else and it disappears, and then I have a problem as to what will go on next to me.

There are tremendous risks ... because there are serious development pressures in many neighborhoods. In some places there are no controls. It's pretty much at the homeowners' and the Department of Buildings' discretion as to what goes on. Over time, alterations transpire that are outside of any controls: doors, windows, façades

change. But these unregulated alterations diminish values. From the end-user's perspective, these do not create desirability or real value. An extreme example is a situation where bulk controls are in place, but one lot is built beyond what the Floor Area Ratio allows. In that case, the value literally is taken away from other properties on this block, and not just because of what's right aesthetically. If that is what occurred, nobody else can benefit to that same degree. So the balance of value has shifted from a shared community value to an individual's value. And it is something you cannot undo.

The architectural aspects that appeal to people – harmonious façades, cornice lines, rooflines—are expressions of individuality, but cannot be of such severe disjointedness that they diminish the community. The pro-landmarking argument that property values will rise is not as compelling as the argument that values will likely diminish in the absence of landmark designation and protection. \*

## HDC PRESERVATION PLATFORM

In 1965 the New York City Council agreed that landmarking “is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people.” Almost a half a century later, preservation continues to serve New Yorkers by helping to create a vibrant, livable city.

- **Preservation Is Investment and Economic Development**

Preservation encourages investment in real estate while stabilizing property values and strengthening the city's tax base. It helps create and protect local jobs in the conservation, reconstruction, manufacturing, film and television, tourism, hospitality and other related industries.

- **Preservation Is Sustainable**

The greenest building is the one already built. Most old buildings were designed with a sophistication of thought rather than a sophistication of technology, which, in terms of climate control and energy usage, integrates them with the environment in a way that most new buildings do not. By restoring the natural ventilation systems of historic buildings, truly green design can be achieved. Furthermore, repairing, rehabilitating and re-using buildings and materials save money, fuel and energy.

- **Preservation Is Diverse**

New York City is not a single monolithic entity but rather a great consolidation of neighborhoods. Preserving the character of those neighborhoods creates stability for the many diverse identities of New York and allows them to flourish without being lost.

The Landmarks Law outlines the many reasons for establishing a means to designate and protect buildings and neighborhoods, including stabilizing property values, fostering civic pride, protecting and enhancing architectural attractions, stimulating tourism and other businesses and, overall, strengthening the economy of the city. However, lobbyists for the real estate industry, longtime foes of preservation, have stepped up their efforts to deregulate neighborhoods and spur speculative development at the cost of New York's economic viability. Contact your City Council member and Borough President and let them know that preservation is important to you and your community!

HDC is vigilantly working to save New York City's future by preserving its past. To help our cause, please visit our website ([www.hdc.org](http://www.hdc.org)) or give us a call (212-614-9107) today!

*Continued from Page 1, Preservation Under Attack!*

Another thrust at the soul of the city is the development planned by New York University, which threatens the character and sense of place of Greenwich Village. The plan would build over one million square feet for institutional and administrative use in the open space



Mid-century Modern office buildings along Park Avenue, in the Midtown East neighborhood of Manhattan.

of a residential development, essentially changing “towers in the park” into just plain towers, and it would also take over public parks. The plan was approved by the City Council but is vigorously opposed by a large portion of the NYU faculty, HDC, local elected officials and more than two dozen neighborhood and community groups that brought and won a legal action against the City administration. NYU may appeal this decision.

A third example in the list of threats to the soul of New York is the planned removal of books from the main branch of the New York Public Library building at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. Used by more than a million readers a year, this beloved landmark is being transformed at enormous public expense from a library with books and access to knowledge into a Prada-like space suitable for a “be-in.” Really, who needs knowledge when you can have a latte in a disposable paper cup? The gutting of the public library building in the name of modernization is a plan that has garnered little support and has been soundly denounced in the press—notably by Ada Louise Huxtable in *The Wall Street Journal* (“You don’t ‘update’ a masterpiece”) and eloquently by Michael Kimmelman in *The New York Times* (“The value of an institution isn’t measured in public square feet. But its value can be devalued by bad architecture”). HDC has been active in efforts to educate the public about this threat and prevent the library from making an irreversible mistake.

Invariably, all these projects are presented to the public as indispensable to the city’s continued relevance, or in the service of a vague notion of “modernization” that when examined turns out to be a very dated notion of modernity. As an added incentive, we are loudly promised “cutting-edge architecture” (whatever that means), which more often than not disappears on the path from approval to construction. What links these projects is a vision of New York City that is blandly generic and flattens out the particulars of place. It is as if these projects’ sponsors are embarrassed by New York’s specificity, its *genius loci*; or perhaps they simply can’t deal with complexity and want to replace New York with a frozen comic book doppelganger. City Planning’s presentation about the Midtown East Rezoning bluntly stated that we needed to emulate Shanghai: *why?* This is New York, not a magazine spread or a real estate ad. It is a *place*.

So the two competing visions of the city are one of top-down planning aiming for a generic place—the “no place/every place” big city close to an airport—and another that looks at New York, *this city*, a specific place composed of many smaller evolving enclaves. In a healthy give-and-take, these two visions can provoke each other to very positive results: the preservation of the theater district in Midtown Manhattan is a great example of a push/pull process that worked; the vibrant historic districts throughout the city that see significant new development—the new and the old depending on each other—also attest to the validity of a joint endeavor. Ultimately, it is about balance and the need for these two visions to become one. With only roughly three percent of all the city’s properties protected by landmark designation, it cannot be said that we are landmarking



Public protest against the New York Public Library’s Central Library Plan, April 2013.

away our future. But with only three percent of our built heritage protected, it is clear that we still have a lot of work to do to recognize and protect our historic built environment in order to fold it into our plans for the future. So, let this be a call to arms, for citizen participation, for collaboration with Bill de Blasio, our new mayor, and for all of us to make a place for the city that exists in our dreams of a better New York. ✱

## RECENT GIFTS AND GRANTS

*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 2013. Listed here are donors of unrestricted gifts of \$100 or more.*

### Government:

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and Councilmembers Margaret Chin, Inez Dickens, Daniel Garodnick, Vincent Gentile, Sara Gonzalez, Stephen Levin and Rosie Mendez; The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

### Foundations:

The New York Community Trust/Windie Knowe Fund, Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, Anonymous (2).

### Professional Partners:

Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners, Brennan Real Estate, Burda Construction Corporation, Cutsogeorge Tooman & Allen Architects, Geto & de Milly, Lichten-Craig Architects, Platt Byard Dovell White, Richard Bienenfeld Architect, TwoSeven, Inc., Vertical Access LLP, Zubatkin Owner Representation.

### Neighborhood Partners:

Auburndale Improvement Association, Bedford Barrow Commerce Block Association, Bedford-Stuyvesant Society for Historic Preservation, Douglaston Little Neck Historical Society, The Drive to Protect the Ladies' Mile District, Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus (FROGG), Friends of Terra Cotta, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic

Districts, Guides Association of New York City, Historic Wallabout Association, Jackson Heights Garden City Society, Judd Foundation, Stuyvesant Park Neighborhood Association, Sunset Park Landmarks Committee, 10th & Stuyvesant Streets Block Association, Tribeca Community Association, Turtle Bay Association, Volunteers for Isham Park, The West Village Committee.

### Friends of HDC:

Brian Agnew, Stacy Albanese, David Alquist, Nancy Anderson, O. Kelly Anderson, John Asher, John M. Bacon, Penelope Bareau, Sharon & Jim Barnes, Hillary Beattie, Joel & Judith Berger, Therese Bernbach, William Bernhard & Catherine Cahill, Susan S. Binger, Michele Birnbaum, Minor L. Bishop, Leo J. Blackman & Kenneth T. Monteiro, Marguerite Blanck, Françoise Bollack & Tom Killian, Allyson Bowen, Claudette Brady, Charles Brainard, Anita Brandt, William B. Brannan, Peter Bray & Bridget Reel, Donald Brennan, B. S. Brown, Robert Buckholz & Anne Elizabeth Fontaine, Albert K. Butzel, George Calderaro & William Megevick, Donna & George Cambas, Martin & Ellen Cammer, Marvin & Patricia Carlson, John Casson, Randy Causer, Bryan Chandler, Wanda Chin, Carol Clark & Kyle Johnson, Heide-Rose Cleary, Harold Cohen,

Susan Costa, Pat Courtney & Jeff Dugan, Julia P. Cowing, Charles L. DeFanti, Carole De Saram & Ray Erickson, Barbara & Alan Delsman, Ward Dennis, Kent Diebolt, Gregory Dietrich, E. L. and Helen S. Doctorow, Dan Donovan, Eugenia G. Dooley, Franny Eberhart, Mark Emerson, Aline & Henry P. Euler, Mimi Findlay, Ronald Lee Fleming, Thomas Fontana, Nicole Francis, Stephen Friedman, Bernard Galiley, Gerald Galison, Christine Gallo, Margaret Halsey Gardiner, Lee Gelber, Mark Goldberg, David Goldfarb, David & Lorna Goodrich, John & Roberta Graziano, Alison G. Greenberg, Frank Guzzetta & Paul Manville, Gale Harris, Jeb Hart, Gary Hattem, John Hilberry, Virginia Holloway, Susan S. Hopper, Robin Howald, William Huxley, Anita Isola, Linda C. Jones, John S. Jurayj, Majda Kallab, Lois Kaminsky, Paul D. & Pat Kaplan, David I. Karabell & Paula A. Moss, Katherine Keating & Larry Schroeder, Doris B. Keeley, Tara Kelly, Thomas Kennedy, John J. & Nora Kerr, Edward S. Kirkland, Edward Klimerman, Robert J. Kornfeld Jr., Allan F. Kramer, Anne Kriken, Carol Krinsky, John Kriskiewicz, Margaret Latimer, Lynne Christine Lerner, Richard Levin, Barry Lewis, Jack Linn, Marion Lipton, Alyssa Loorya & Chris Ricciardi, Robin Lynn & Larry Blumberg, Linda Mariano,

Susan Mathisen, Katrina Maxtone-Graham, Richard McDermott, Jane Carroll McGroarty, Abigail Mellen, Joyce A. Mendelsohn, Pauline Metcalf, Paula Michtom, Philip Mindlin, Michael Morrell, Richard D. Moses, Chris Neville & Sarah Gamble, Susan Nuller, Gail M. Papp, Virginia Parkhouse, Ed Parran & Jim Guidera, Andrew Paul, Jacqueline Peu-Duvalon & Mason V. C. Stark, Lee Harris Pomeroy, Sharr Prohaska, Lois Rakoff, Roslyn Raskin, Hilda Regier, Christa Rice & Gail Erickson, Genie & Donald Rice, Alice Rich Lewis, Janet Roberson, William Rogers, Joan V. Rome, David Rosenberg & Bernice K. Leber, Joseph S. Rosenberg, Michelle Saliola, Martina Salisburg & Franco Gotte, Mark Satlof, Charles Savage, Julia Schoeck, Katherine Schoonover, Herbert J. Schwarz, Patricia Bakwin Selch, Joel A. Siegel, Roberta Silman, Joanne Simon, Beverly Moss Spatt, Susan W. Stachelberg, John & Patricia Stack, Gillian Steel, Melvin & Marie Stein, Maryanne Taddeo, Jack Taylor, Carole Teller, Stephen Tilly & Elizabeth Martin, Susan & Paul Tunick, Wayne Turett, Marie Turley, Irene Van Slyke, James & Karen Van Westering, Cynthia C. Wainwright, Elizabeth Watson, Beth Windsor, Kate Wood & David Sprouls, Regis & Johannes Worsoe, Deborah Wye, Silvio Youla, Linda Yowell, Anonymous (3).

### HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

232 East 11th Street, New York, NY 10003

tel: 212-614-9107 fax: 212-614-9127 email: [hdc@hdc.org](mailto:hdc@hdc.org) website: [www.hdc.org](http://www.hdc.org)

All images © Historic Districts Council unless otherwise noted.