

# DISTRICT LINES

NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



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## A LETTER TO MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO

*From Leo Blackman, former HDC Board President*

Dear Mr. Mayor:

I am the immediate past Board President of the Historic Districts Council, the citywide voice for 500 community preservation groups across the five boroughs. From Grand Concourse to the Lower East Side, Kew Gardens, Bedford-Stuyvesant and St. George, we represent an incredibly motivated and diverse grassroots movement. Our constituents are active, involved citizens who care deeply about where they live, and seek to manage the pace of change in their neighborhood's character and maintain its unique sense of place. You and they should be natural allies.

But our constituency is alarmed by proposals coming from your administration. Neighborhood voices are not being considered. In Harlem, the Renaissance Ballroom, a beloved local landmark, is to be torn down for featureless apartments. In East New York, there is fear that upzoning and resultant gentrification will displace long-time residents. Brooklyn public libraries and public parks are being sold for development with little or no resident input. On Staten Island, 18th-century houses may be removed from consideration by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, stripping away the little protection they have. In Queens, residents worry about losing mom-and-pop retail to chain stores due to escalating rents. In Manhattan's Lower East Side, community gardens are now being deemed development sites rather than essential and hard-won green spaces.

The Historic Districts Council is concerned that, under your administration, designation of landmarks and historic districts has slowed incredibly, especially compared to other Mayoral administrations during their first two years in office. Furthermore, under Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan, the Landmarks Preservation

Commission seems more focused on completing projects begun under the previous administration than seeking out new areas which merit protection. We are supportive of the agency's efforts to finish what has been started—nobody wants a backlog of work to accrue—but the agency must remain responsive and open to new community initiatives.

Your public statements about historic preservation have been only in relation to housing units, and reveal a lack of understanding of the broader benefits of landmarking. Current proposed solutions to creating affordable housing appear wholly dependent on the real-estate industry. The Real Estate Board of New York has shrewdly focused on your expressed desire for more affordable housing with full-page ads and unsubstantiated reports claiming that landmarking stifles such construction (despite the financial success of market-rate projects in TriBeCa, Gansevoort and Ladies' Mile). REBNY's \$9 million annual budget, used to influence politicians, elections, and public opinion (both here and in Albany), makes it difficult for us to be heard. Yet it is essential that as our Mayor you consider both sides of this complex issue.

Preservationists support affordable housing. We simply want it to incorporate existing places in balance with new construction and be considerate of a neighborhood's scale and appearance. There are numerous examples where historic buildings have been successfully repurposed for housing, predominately loft and warehouse buildings in the SoHo, NoHo, TriBeCa, Greenpoint, and DUMBO Historic Districts. The former Western Electric Company building (Greenwich Village Historic District) was long ago converted into Westbeth Artists' Housing, and the Prince George Hotel (Madison Square North HD) was similarly reconfigured as supportive housing. HDC can provide you with any number of other examples.

REBNY's sudden professed sympathy for the working class is laughable, in light of their record. The organization has opposed any regulation of rents since

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# New Design + Old Places

Articles in this issue of *District Lines* are drawn from presentations given at HDC’s 2014 Annual Preservation Conference, held on March 7 and 8. The Conference featured winning projects from HDC’s inaugural Design Awards program, which celebrates projects that broaden perceptions of new design in historic settings. This discourse was expanded upon with lectures and panels, including presentations and discussion by the Design Award winners, critics, architects, and advocates.

## CONFERENCE PART ONE – DESIGN AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

**Rick Cook, COOKFOX**

*Historic Front Street*

The project involved 11 existing buildings and three new ones. Many buildings were shrouded because they were falling into the street; some had been lost; others were held in place by bracing. The question was how our new composition could be inspired by and respect the history of the South Street Seaport. The new buildings



Photo by Heidi Trinklein for COOKFOX Architects.

had to speak to the existing ones and to each other. We worked at not over-burnishing the buildings to encourage play between new and old. For these 200-year-old buildings to wear their age comfortably, we used grout injection to stabilize the wall

without repointing, providing contrast with the new architecture. We tried to give the neighborhood life again with buildings that were unique to this place, that were in dialogue. None of these buildings would have ever been created in any other place.

**Scott Demel, Marvel Architects**

*McCarren Pool and Bathhouse*

We preserved the original design while incorporating a new program to serve a wider public function for the community. This is one of 11 pools opened in 1936. Originally it was the size of four Olympic pools, with a capacity for 8,000 swimmers. The reconfigured U-shape with the peninsula has a capacity for 1,500. Everybody shared the experience of walking up the central staircase, entering through the grand arch; keeping that was key. By 1984, the Parks Department couldn’t maintain the facility any longer and it was closed and abandoned; many features were lost. We replicated the original bronze doors, fixtures, and the ticket booth, using documents in the Parks Department archive. Wire baskets from the old changing rooms were refurbished and hung from the ceiling. All the wood is reclaimed Coney Island boardwalk, a marriage between preservation work and sustainability and reuse of materials.



Photo by David Sunberg/Esto.

**Sara Caples, Caples Jefferson**

*Weeksville Heritage Center*

The Weeksville Heritage Center, located about halfway between Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, is a very small historic district of four houses, the remnants of a freedman’s village that arose after the end of slavery in New York in 1827. In the 1970s, Joan Maynard spearheaded the movement to save and restore the sites. People in the neighborhood loved walking by and seeing that African Americans had a history in New York. The entrance to the new visitor center straddles Hunterfly Road, an old



Photo by Nic Lehoux.

Indian trail that was lost in the modern street grid. Our building includes classrooms, offices, a shop, a viewing corridor, a meeting room for 250 people, a gallery, and a library. Since the rediscovery of African American history is part of the story of this site, we looked at patterns distinctive to African American art, weaving that into the warp and woof of the building. The building is meant to be contemporary, while referential. ✖

## CONFERENCE PART TWO – WHAT IS GOOD DESIGN?

*That was the question posed during the second part of the Conference to four panelists who regularly contribute to the public discourse about architecture and urban planning. What follows are excerpts from their thoughts on successful and unsuccessful examples of new design in historic contexts, and what lessons can be drawn from them.*

**Stephen Byrns**, a founding partner of BSKS Architects, a firm active with new design in historic districts; a former NYC Landmarks Commissioner; and the founding chairman of the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy.

The Hearst Building was approved before I was a commissioner, and I certainly approve of a tall building on top. As the tower was going up I thought, “This really looks great. It’s pretty fat, but I hope it keeps on going up.” Well, it stopped going up any farther. The proportions of the building are regrettable, as is the detailing. That cuts a little close to home, because one of my partners at BSKS was presenting a project at 114-116 Hudson Street to the Landmarks Commission around the same time. It was a simple red brick building with a glass-and-metal addition on the site of a former parking lot next door. At the time, we were a less-well-



114-116 Hudson Street in TriBeCa. Photo by Jonathan Wallen.

known architecture firm, and the commissioners really scrutinized every detail. My partner had to return at least two times before they approved it. As a result it’s a strong design, especially if you look at the careful detailing. That careful attention to detailing was not asked of Lord [Norman] Foster, the architect of the Hearst tower. As result, it has snap-on mullions that are worthy of a New Jersey office park. I

was told a number of times in my six years on the commission that they try to hold everybody to high standards, but it seems to me that if you bring in a famous architect and a huge model, they’re let off a little easier, which is I think an unfortunate situation.

**Matt A.V. Chaban**, metro reporter for *The New York Times*. Previously reported for the *Daily News*, *The Architect’s Newspaper*, *The New York Observer*, and *Crain’s New York Business*.

At the Domino Sugar site in Williamsburg, the idea is that density can equal preservation. As Mayor de Blasio has advocated 200,000 units of affordable housing, perhaps we should dub him “Build de

Blasio.” This project was approved under the Bloomberg administration. I’ve called this project “Dubai on the Hudson” [technically it is on the East River]. The master plan by SHoP Architects preserves the refinery building, but it’s surrounded by 50-story towers that would be more appropriate on the other side of the river. The whole point of this rezoning was to protect the scale of the neighborhood behind it. When done appropriately, density and preservation can go hand in hand. It can serve as a sort of release



New mixed-use development at the old Domino Sugar site. Courtesy of SHoP.

valve for the pent-up demand in the city’s housing market. Can there be livable streets and density, preservation and density? This is going to be a huge issue in the coming years, and Domino may be the model for large-scale development in the de Blasio era. In the 1970s and 1980s when we were saving all these brownstones, those neighborhoods were empty; now they’re all full. Where are we going to put the million people who are supposed to move here in the next 20 years?

SHoP’s other big Brooklyn project, the Barclays Center at the Atlantic Terminal, has turned out well. It’s not in a historic district, so there weren’t any public-design controls. Compared to the earlier Frank Gehry/Ellerbe Becket proposal, SHoP did an admirable job. The building does better than the horrendous mall across the street. It breaks down the scale of the building, nodding to the adjacent four-story brownstone neighborhoods and incorporating storefronts. Walking along Atlantic Avenue, you don’t notice that there’s this looming arena next to you. It is a million times better than Madison Square Garden, which I think we all can agree is an atrocity. I’d certainly rather have a bad, interesting building than a boring, blasé one.

**James Russell**, architecture critic for *Bloomberg News*; adjunct professor at the Spitzer School of Architecture at City College; an editor of *Architectural Record*; author of *The Agile City: Building Well, Building Wealth*.

On the question of bigness, does contextual have to mean the same size, the same scale, matching the lines of windows or entablatures? I don’t agree that tall is innately bad, partly because I think tall and skinny is better than medium-size and fat. The real atrocity is 9 West 57th Street, by SOM in the 1970s. Its impact on its immediate surroundings is much harder to take than One57, which has a 59’-by-70’ footprint. Brilliant work by the Municipal Art Society

shows that it will cast a shadow some 4,000 feet long across Central Park. But is that too big a shadow? It's a skinny shadow and it will move. Regarding density and size, we really have to think through those terms. My agenda is really light and air. Most preservationists accept the old setback New York zoning, but consider what kind of light results. We must think about the mid-blocks to a much greater extent. On the East Midtown rezoning, I was not pro or con, since the very large buildings would only go on really big sites, and those



One57. Photo from wikimedia.

nice, early 20th-century buildings dating to when Grand Central was built will be safe. But what will happen is that those gigantic buildings on the avenues proposed under the rezoning would cast the surrounding buildings into darkness, including the interiors of the blocks. Most of those early 20th-century buildings have light on the street, and at least some light on their interior courtyards. The proposed upzoning will deprive them of value, because daylight is value. Whether landmarked or not, they become vulnerable for redevelopment, because they've lost their value. With mechanical ventilation and electric lighting, what do you need that window for, really? But we all need that window, viscerally. The continuous streetwall may not be godlike, and maybe we can have some breaks and yet continue to respect the integrity of historic places.

**Mel Wymore**, chair of Manhattan CB 7; board member of the West Side Y; member of the PTA of the Ethical Culture Fieldstone School.

I came to the world of preservation in a very circuitous manner. I actually know very little about architecture and appropriateness, but I have been a huge advocate for community, and the way in which our neighborhoods are constructed within an urban environment. I have found in my 25-plus years of community activism that when there's a battle between the old and the new, the general structure of our zoning laws and economic incentives are always stacked against what's already there. Because of that, I've found that people who advocate for the historic integrity of a neighborhood also advocate for many unintended benefits to the neighborhood.

The proposed new Riverside Center, a three-million-square-foot development on 59th Street and West End Avenue, consists of five large towers on the blocks immediately north of the non-designated IRT Power Station by McKim, Mead & White. The proposal would have rendered 59th Street a back alley to this large development, three buildings to be lined up opposite the power station as the service route for all the garbage pickup and waste management for these buildings. The McKim, Mead & White building would have been completely overwhelmed. During the land-review process, even though this is not a landmarked building, one of our biggest arguments was that this beautiful building needed to be given space. We used that argument as leverage for more open space, and to reduce the size and orientation of three buildings. We successfully fought for those buildings to be separated and spaced apart, so that the entire new construction will actually provide views of the power station. Working with advocacy groups, we reshaped the proposed development. It's very important to think of preservation as something broader than just acknowledging some historic period in the past or some architectural significance. Historic preservation is essential to the preservation of the character of a neighborhood, a way in which people actually live today, as that neighborhood changes, and bringing some rationality to the pace of that change. ✖

## LOLA FINKELSTEIN ON EAST MIDTOWN REZONING

### *District Lines sits down with the Chair of the East Midtown Multi-Board Task Force*

*In early 2011, the Department of City Planning proposed a rezoning of East Midtown Manhattan. The proposed area affected Community Boards 1, 4, 5, and 6. In order to have each CB represented, the East Midtown Multi-Board Task Force was created. Lola Finkelstein was considered the ideal choice by the Board 5 Chair, Vikki Barbero, to head this important task force. Ms. Finkelstein, a member of CB5 for three decades, who chaired the Health and Human Services Committee and later the full board, also headed the Midtown West Side Tri-Board Task Force in the early 1990s, which dealt with the revival of Columbus Circle. Her considerable depth of knowledge as well as her expertise and experience as a chair contributed to the decision that she was by far the best and most qualified person to head the East Midtown Multi-Board Task Force. The Historic Districts Council worked directly with the Task Force, along with the New York Landmarks Conservancy and the Municipal Art Soci-*

*ety. The collaboration resulted in a report entitled "Principles for a New East Midtown," discussing, among other things, the need for infrastructure improvements and for preservation. The City Planning Department withdrew the proposal after then City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Councilmember Dan Garodnick publicly announced they would not support the proposed rezoning.*

**DL** When was the East Midtown Rezoning Proposal initiated by the Bloomberg administration?

**LF** In the spring of 2012. They moved it pretty fast. It came to CB5 as a rezoning of East Midtown. At first they made a presentation of a study, which, as time went by, became more detailed. It was a 73-block area from 39th Street to just short of 60th Street. Originally it was from Second to Fifth Avenue, but the residents

of Turtle Bay complained so much about the effect on their area that they stopped at the east side of Third Avenue and pulled back between Fifth and Madison. The proposed rezoning was supposed to make it possible for a handful of new denser, taller commercial buildings to be built to stave off the threat of competition from cities like London, Dubai, and Singapore. It would remove certain difficulties for developers and allow them to build higher than under the current zoning. Remember, East Midtown had been downzoned



Lola Finkelstein

in the 1980s to attract more development on the West Side, so the buildings that had been built before the downzoning are overbuilt under the current zoning.

**DL** But, of course, they still need development on the West Side. Hudson Yards is barely starting.

**LF** At that time, they were not even thinking that far west. West then was Sixth Avenue.

**DL** Why did Mayor Bloomberg think we were in competition with Dubai and Shanghai? Why didn't they take into account competition between Midtown and Downtown? Where do you think that rationale came from?

**LF** It came from members of the administration who had been traveling and seeing a city like Dubai, which has become a mecca of skyscrapers attracting certain parts of the financial industry. The planners were afraid that New York City—Midtown—would lose its pre-eminent role as a business center. Of course, we felt that this was a flawed rationale. It is not tall buildings alone that make a Class A business district. It is the total built environment. We were certainly not opposed to some new buildings, but new buildings alone were not the answer to the problems in East Midtown, which primarily are overcrowded transit facilities and sidewalks, the lack of green space, the lack of open space, and a 9-to-5 environment where the whole district seems to close down and go dark the way Wall Street used to do. We thought that mixed-use development would make some sense and, most important, that infrastructure improvements were needed and had been for the last 25 years. They had to be addressed before there was any new development.

**DL** Yes, that was very well articulated in the Task Force's report, "Principles for a New East Midtown" (available for download on CB5's website). But why do you think that preservation played such a minor role in the formulation of this plan?

**LF** It is relevant today because there is a real campaign against preservation. The animosity probably results from the 2011 passage of the [Borough Hall] Skyscraper Historic District in Brooklyn, which REBNY very much wanted to defeat, but it really surfaced with East Midtown. Right now it is an all-out war.

**DL** The failure of the plan to consider East Midtown as a distinct place is in part the failure to take preservation into account in the planning process.

**LF** Genuine planning would include the architectural, social, and

cultural fabric, the ambiance of an area, and a respect for the past. Shanghai has destroyed so much of its old areas that they are building ersatz historic blocks to try to replace what they have destroyed.

**DL** You live in Midtown, where a number of buildings are being rehabilitated, restored, or improved by powerful real-estate concerns like Vornado, among others. What's your take on this?

**LF** The premise of the plan was that New York was going to be outpaced by other cities; that our stock was obsolete; that these buildings which were 60 or 70 years old had obsolete, leaky envelopes, ceiling heights that are too low, interiors with too many columns, and dated lobbies. But these same developers who would build larger buildings under the new proposed zoning have taken at least three buildings and done gut renovations to make them 21st-century buildings. It is not possible to convince any of us that an old building is necessarily an obsolete building. There are purposes for older buildings. And what was going to happen to the Class B buildings that serve a vital purpose? Vornado and SL Green are restoring and updating 280 Park Avenue, and doing a great job of it. So far it looks fantastic. This is not to say that there should not be some new buildings.

**DL** Given the fact that the area seems to be able to grow organically—there are new buildings in Midtown, for example the new skyscraper by Rafael Viñoly on 56th and Park—why is a plan needed?

**LF** There was one part of this proposal that is very important to understand: Because of the 1980s downzoning, some buildings are "overbuilt" according to the current zoning. So we proposed a zoning text change to allow for grandfathering of the higher FAR (floor-area-ratio, meaning more allowable square footage). But that did not happen; it would be a simple measure to solve that problem.

**DL** How do you see improvements to the transportation infrastructure playing into this? After all, transportation—Grand Central Terminal—created Midtown, so why is there not more discussion about transportation improvements?

**LF** There is a lot of discussion around this issue. The new proposal they are fast-tracking—One Vanderbilt, to be built by SL Green—requires \$200 million worth of infrastructure improvements. This will go to widening some platforms and building additional stairs and escalators. This is a unique site, because parts of the terminal sit right under the building, which makes it ideal for additional underground access. They say that this will make movement easier for travelers and commuters. It's a very peculiar situation, though, because the MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority) should be doing all of these things. The City is now letting MTA off the hook by giving more FAR to developers to do the work that is needed. There is a moral hazard there, but the City says that MTA does not have the money. At the same time they say it is a high priority. If it is a high priority, why don't they address it in their budget?

**DL** But to get back to the real-estate industry's enmity toward preservation, we don't understand it. They are making so much money from restoring and turning over old buildings and selling them or renting them.

**LF** That is what is so bizarre. You go to REBNY's offices and they are in one of the most beautifully restored Art Deco buildings. SL Green is in the Graybar Building. It's a gorgeous "obsolete" building and beautifully restored. I don't understand it!

**DL** In Midtown, what one needs is really a mix. You need a mix

of Class A and Class B office buildings, some residential buildings so that the area does not go dark at 8 p.m., older buildings where different services can be provided, a mix of floor plates and rents. That's what makes a place tick, and your report was very clear about that. By the way, the report is available on the websites of CB5 and CB6, but not CB1. Why is that?

**LF** CB1 had a very specific interest in being on the Task Force. Their interest was that Lower Manhattan needed more time. There was a lot of vacancy down there and they were not quite ready for the competition. Also the 4, 5, and 6 trains go down there and are very overcrowded. Each of the community boards, in addition to CB5—CB1, CB4, and CB6—had their own reason to join because they felt that the plan would affect them.

**DL** You live in Midtown, so you must see and have seen the changes. What do you like about Midtown?

**LF** Why am I living here? I love my apartment, but it's not really where I'd like to be. But I can walk anywhere: I have a hairdresser across the street, a dentist down the block, and now Whole Foods is three blocks away, so it's getting better. But at 8 p.m. on Park Avenue you can hear yourself walking, because it is empty.

**DL** Do you think it's getting better?

**LF** It's getting better, yes. But now the whole area is going to be a construction site. When I moved here, on 56th Street between Park and Lexington, there were a couple of brownstones going from our building to the corner. There is still one at the corner. There was a florist, a milliner, and a shoemaker. It was very neighborhood-ish.

When they announced the rezoning for Midtown, I was initially very excited because in my naïveté I think I imagined urban renewal and I thought what a wonderful opportunity to get some more open space, wider sidewalks, more greenery, to divert some of the bus lanes. But that was not what it was. They wanted to re-create an office park.

**DL** And that is what is really dated, because this approach has been somewhat discredited in planning.

**LF** Right, of course. Everywhere in major cities it's "live and work," because people like to socialize where they work and vice versa. The idea of going home on the 5 o'clock to White Plains where your wife will pick you up at the station and drive you home to a home-cooked dinner does not work anymore. You want to know about the future? We really don't think that the idea of "fast-tracking" Vanderbilt Avenue from 42nd to 47th Streets is consistent with the idea of comprehensive planning. We're disappointed that this proposal has been fast-tracked, but we are doing our very best to study it and improve it to the greatest extent possible. It's not a happy situation. We know that Vanderbilt Avenue backs up on Madison Avenue and that Madison has the worst crowded sidewalks in the city, so these massive buildings that call themselves Vanderbilt Avenue buildings are really Madison Avenue buildings.

**DL** In a perfect world, what would your dream be for good planning in New York City, if you were the planning czar?

**LF** I would take it block by block and analyze the needs, the built environment, the optimum for that block—how that block adds to

## 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." 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 and landmarking are important to you and your community!

HDC is vigilantly working to save New York City's future by preserving its past. To learn more about our efforts, please visit our website: [www.hdc.org](http://www.hdc.org).

the next one and the one behind it. I would try to make sure there is more open space, more street life and more variety, including the preservation of older buildings and historic fabric. You have to understand how many Class B businesses there are. How do we retain them? How can “obsolete” buildings be renovated to a high standard in a way that is less damaging to the environment than demolition and new construction? What is the cost? At first we thought if you could just widen the sidewalks and continue the good work of the Grand Central Partnership, that would be a beginning, and then you could scatter a few mixed-use buildings here and there to have more street life.

**DL** In terms of advocacy for good planning and preservation, residential districts tend to be the most active because people live there and are concerned, and they will do the hard work of advocacy.

**LF** That’s why we had such a problem because we could not get a real residential constituency. We sent out flyers. We had people in the terminal handing out flyers, but we could not get a real grassroots campaign going. A real residential constituency exists in CB6, which is on the East Side from Lexington Avenue to the East River. And they were able to get Second Avenue removed from this plan because there was such a critical mass of residents.

**DL** In your report you advocate for zoning that would allow a mix of residential and office uses in buildings, with a maximum square footage for residential use because it is much more profitable.

**LF** We are still going to continue to advocate for this mix.

**DL** We think that the work you have done on this will ultimately have a positive effect on future planning in the city.

**LF** Yes, it has helped other communities recognize that they can be effective.

**DL** And what you did was also tremendously important because of the way you did it. You conducted this effort with such civility. It is a model. So often these urban struggles are conducted in a climate



**Teri Slater**  
1944-2015

The Historic Districts Council and New York City’s preservation community mourn the passing of our dear friend on January 13, 2015. Teri was a passionate preservationist, committed community

advocate, and fierce defender of her beloved Upper East Side. A longtime community board member, director and officer of HDC, and volunteer for numerous other preservation and community groups, she served the public with dedication, intelligence, and passion tempered with grace, caring, and humor. She was pivotal in numerous campaigns to protect her neighborhood from inappropriate development, especially from institutions seeking to build enormous and unnecessary expansions. She was a convener of groups and connector of people. Her absence is unimaginable. She is survived by her sons, Eric and Edward, and all the many people whose lives she touched.

of bitter animosity, with people engaging in *ad hominem* attacks. You did none of that, and that, too, gives hope to those of us who believe that civility in public discourse is important.

*This interview took place on June 27, 2014. District Lines was represented by former HDC adviser Jayne Merkel and by HDC adviser Françoise Bollack, then President of the Board of HDC. ✨*

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its founding in 1896. It is the author of the 421-a program, which provides tax abatements for luxury construction to both the developers and purchasers. This has fueled the unwanted by-product of foreign oligarchs buying condos in new super-tall towers (costing tens of millions) shadowing Central Park, while paying astonishingly low city taxes. Average New York homeowners are extended no such benefit.

You campaigned on a promise to narrow the divide between New York City’s rich and poor—something HDC supports and encourages. Voters assumed you would help the vast majority of citizens who are struggling. Trusting developers to solve our city’s housing crisis is one-sided at best. Tearing down the tenements that provide truly affordable rental apartments, to build towers with a small percentage of subsidized units at the bottom (or off-site) that are too costly for the working poor, simply does not fix the problem.

We need you to involve New York’s neighborhoods in the process of locating affordable apartments. The Historic Districts Council is uniquely qualified to assist you with this effort. We are sure that government can provide workable housing solutions

while still protecting the extraordinarily diverse built history of our great city. We’re waiting for a sign that you agree. Proclaim a new vision incorporating Landmark Preservation with Community Development and ask those of us in the trenches for help.

Yours sincerely,  
Leo Blackman

DISTRICT LINES

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*The Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York’s designated historic districts and buildings, and for neighborhoods worthy of preservation. The Council is dedicated to preserving the integrity of New York City’s Landmarks Law and to furthering the preservation ethic.*

## 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 2014. 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, Matthieu Eugene, Daniel Garodnick, Vincent Gentile, Corey Johnson, Ben Kallos, Stephen Levin, Mark Levine 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

Gramercy Park Foundation, AH Study, New York Community Trust/LuEsther T. Mertz Fund, The New York Community Trust/Windie Knowe Fund, Preservation League of New York State/Preserve New York, Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Anonymous (2).

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