



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

232 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street New York NY 10003  
tel (212) 614-9107 fax (212) 614-9127 email hdc@hdc.org

February 26, 2019

World Monuments Watch Selection Committee  
World Monuments Fund  
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite #2412  
New York, NY 10118

Dear Selection Committee,

The Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York's historic places. We strongly support the application for the Brooklyn Heights Promenade to be placed on the World Monuments Watch list. The Promenade is a linear pedestrian park that spans several city blocks and provides unequalled views of international icons such as the Lower Manhattan skyline, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island. When people across the world think of New York City, this is the view which they imagine – a view which has been reinforced in countless films and media for over 50 years. This listing is critical to help bring international attention to an enormous threat to an urban experience of global significance.

Currently, New York City's Department of Transportation (DOT) has put forward a proposal to build a "temporary" six-lane highway, replacing the Promenade at grade with neighborhood streets as its preferred solution to repairing the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. The proposed new highway will continue past the Promenade section to fly over the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges before rejoining the existing road. This plan will take between six to ten years to complete and cost around \$4 billion dollars. While the highway would be in place for at least six years, the DOT's proposal requires it to leave a "vastly expanded" Promenade, which in reality will be a remodeled six-lane highway.

In addition to its obvious importance to the visual identity of New York City, the threat to the Promenade has grave implications for local and federal protections for recognized historic properties. Brooklyn Heights was established in 1965 within months of the establishment of the NYC Landmarks Law as the city's first designated historic district. This designation, while terse by modern standards, included the Promenade within its boundaries. The entire Brooklyn Heights area, including the Promenade, was designated by the United States government as a National Historic Landmark in 1965. In 1974, the New York City Planning Commission voted unanimously to grant the Brooklyn Heights Promenade a new designation of a "special scenic district", the first in the US, in order to preserve the outstanding scenic view it affords to all New Yorkers and visitors from around the world. For the government to destroy this this protected urban amenity for traffic mitigation throws a shadow onto all the protections which New York City's and America's historic properties depend on.

The inclusion of the Promenade on the World Monument Watch List will help immeasurably in educating the public of the importance of this concern. It would help elevate the threat to this iconic New York place to its appropriately international status and answer the opposition's charges of parochialism.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Simeon Bankoff  
Executive Director