



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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Letter re: Why Has This 258-Year-Old Mansion Been Left to Fall Apart? Submitted to the New York Times on October 27, 2023 (unpublished)

The Historic Districts Council appreciates the premise of Ginia Bellafante's October 27th article raising awareness about the deteriorated state of the Morris-Jumel Mansion. HDC strongly believes we need to constantly keep an eye on both our city-owned as well as privately-owned landmarks so we do not lose them.

But we believe the article misses some major points. The Landmarks Preservation Commission's review process in many of these cases is not the reason this process is held up, but rather it is the city's capital funding process: a dysfunctional mess in need of reform.

Additionally, we need to prioritize allocating money for maintenance so that our irreplaceable collection of public historic sites do not fall into disrepair in the first place.

It also seems very odd that Ms. Bellafante would choose to tack on an attack on the preservation community at the end of the article, especially the continued trope that preservation is at odds with affordable housing. At HDC, we believe that preservation can be part of the solution to the affordable housing crisis through adaptive reuse of existing buildings and development of new housing that respects our historic places.

In just the past few years, new large affordable housing buildings have been approved on landmark sites including at St. James Episcopal Church in the Bronx and at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church on the Lower East Side. This does not count the reuse of historic buildings for new housing, such as the conversion of the Triborough Hospital for Tuberculosis in Jamaica and the reuse of the central building at Our Lady of Lourdes in Bushwick.

We believe the Mayor's recently-announced City of Yes proposal for Housing Opportunity will create many more chances for both public and private owners to convert existing commercial buildings to much needed affordable housing.

Historic preservation advocacy is not part of the affordable housing crisis. It's part of the solution.

Sincerely,
Frampton Tolbert
Executive Director