

HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

The Municipal Art Society of New York

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LANDMARKS
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HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

GREENWICH
VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
VILLAGE
PRESERVATION

July 20, 2023

Hon. James Oddo, Commissioner
NYC Department of Buildings
280 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Oddo and Chair Carroll:

We are following up on several meetings and conversations in recent months about the need to ensure the preservation of vulnerable historic buildings -- conditions that challenge the authenticity and integrity of a structure to threaten the very characteristics for which a property was originally designated as a landmark. In order to avoid their destruction from work, accidents, or neglect, we write to share some additional thoughts and suggestions regarding how to do so. These include:

- The Landmarks Preservation Commission implementing requirements for certain credentials, classes, or experience for engineers and contractors to be approved to perform sensitive work on or near vulnerable historic buildings. Conversely, the LPC and/or DOB could restrict contractors without such experience or those who have overseen projects with safety violations from being approved for work on such projects.
- Offering greater clarification about the system for notification of required vibration monitoring for work on and near historic buildings. Who is required to be notified? It seems this requirement could be broadened to include more parties to ensure issues which lead to damage are addressed in a timely manner.
- Ensuring that the LPC and/or DOB's engineer inspects all sensitive work being done on or near vulnerable historic buildings while the work is underway. We understand more of this is now being done, but it's unclear how often or when. It seems vital to ensure that this be done in all cases where needed.
- Forming a committee of preservationists, architects, and engineers with expertise in this area to look at these issues and make recommendations to city agencies about steps to be taken. Such committees have been convened in the past, and we understand one was convened during this most recent round of examination. We would be interested in knowing who was included in that meeting, as it seems many valuable voices and experts were not included in this convening, and

there would be value in perhaps continuing that conversation. Joseph Tortorella, PE, Principal Emeritus of Silman has been involved in other such convenings, and indicated he would be more than willing to do so again. We believe having such a convening take place on an ongoing basis would be most effective.

We believe that further and ongoing work is needed to ensure that our city's vulnerable historic buildings are protected. We appreciate that city agencies have been examining these issues and implementing changes. However, we also believe there is continuing room for improvement. We look forward to hearing back from you about these questions, ideas, and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Frampton Tolbert, Executive Director
Historic Districts Council



Elizabeth Goldstein, President
Municipal Art Society



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Cc: City Councilmember Erik Bottcher
City Councilmember Gale Brewer
Joseph Tortorella