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July 6, 2007

The Honorable Robert B. Tierney, Chairman
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
One Centre Street--Ninth Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Tierney:

I write to urge the Commission to calendar and designate West-Park Presbyterian Church as an official New York City landmark **as soon as possible**. We must save this extraordinary nineteenth-century complex from destruction.

As a historian of nineteenth-century American architecture, I know that West-Park Church is a significant American building. Located on the northeast corner of Amsterdam Avenue and West 86th Street in Manhattan, it is one of New York's most interesting historic churches. The oldest section of it, the chapel at the east end, was designed by the famous Leopold Eidlitz and built in 1884. Henry F. Kilburn designed the adjoining church which was built about 1890. Eidlitz is well-known; Kilburn less so, but in his time, Kilburn was prominent and respected. His works include the Castle at Tarrytown and the former, now demolished, Colonial Club in New York City. A fine example of the Richardsonian-Romanesque mode, West-Park Presbyterian Church is a commanding red sandstone-walled complex with strong, rock-faced stones laid up in a random pattern and having deep joints. The church's tall, monumental tower with its long lancet windows, corner tourelles, and high shingled roof grandly climaxes the complex. Although some of the church's exterior bas-relief ornament has been destroyed, most of it survives in good condition, including colonette capitals and door- and window-arch moldings.

Although Manhattan's Upper West Side has several historically and architecturally significant churches, West Park Presbyterian Church is distinctively different in appearance and design. To quote the AIA Guide, it is "one of the West Side's loveliest landmarks." It is not, however, an official New York City landmark, which it should be. I urge you and the Commission to preserve this important church by designating it as an official landmark.

Sincerely,

Sarah Bradford Landau
Professor of Art History
New York University
(and former LPC Commissioner)