



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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Statement of the Historic Districts Council
Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing

5/4/2010

Item 30
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

107446- Block 1897, lot 19-
West 102nd Street - Riverside Park Scenic Landmark

A comfort station and recreation building designed by Clinton Lloyd and built in 1937, within an English Romantic style park and parkway, built in 1873-1902 and designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, with modifications and additions built in 1934-37 and designed by Clifton Llyod and Gilmore Clarke. Application is to replace masonry infill and construct barrier free access ramps.

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts and neighborhoods meriting preservation. Its Public Review Committee monitors proposed changes within historic districts and changes to individual landmarks and has reviewed the application now before the Commission.

While the proposed is full of good intentions, there is much to be considered before any decisions can be made.

Reopening the façade of the park building is welcomed, but not if it will only be re-enclosed with what appears to be a generic storefront and roll down gates. The clunky infill bears no apparent relation to the structure, no consideration is given to the building's primary feature, the arches. Terra cotta screens, both decorative and practical, are not to be reinstalled, but instead plain window grilles are proposed. Light aluminum does not feel like a sympathetic material for this structure or a scenic landmark in general. If no other solution is possible right now, HDC is tempted to say, just leave the façade be.

The barrier-free access ramp is a tight squeeze, both for the existing tree and the users of the ramp, and we question its practicality. Last year there was a proposal for a ramp to the public restrooms of a concessions building in Fort Tryon Park. In that case, the ramp was situated within the arcade, a discreet, practical, and appropriate solution.

Updating and adapting a seemingly simple public building is not necessarily a simple task. Examples of successful projects, such as the one at Fort Tryon Park, should be looked to for inspiration.



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



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