



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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Statement of the Historic Districts Council
Designation Hearing

July 14, 2009

Item I
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
LP 2338
WEST PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts and neighborhoods meriting preservation.

HDC has long been concerned about the preservation of our city's precious and irreplaceable historic houses of worship. This concern has risen considerably in recent years as the white-hot furnace of real-estate speculation has led to the staggering demolition of several significant historic churches and synagogues, such as St. Ann's, the Rivington Street Shul, Saint Saviours, Astoria Presbyterian, Bay Ridge United Methodist to name but a few. We do not want to see West-Park Presbyterian Church added to this dark list. Instead we would prefer it join the growing list of historic houses of worship you have designated.

That West-Park is architecturally significant is obvious to anyone who sees it. To quote noted architectural historian Andrew Dolkart; this is "unquestionably one of the most beautiful religious structures on the Upper West Side. The bold massing of this Romanesque Revival style building, the soaring tower anchoring the corner of Amsterdam Avenue and West 86th Street, and the extraordinary deep red sandstone cladding combine to create a building of singular power." Barry Bergdoll, curator of architecture for MoMa calls it "one of the architecturally most distinguished and historically most important of Manhattan's surviving Nineteenth century churches." New York City simply cannot afford to lose such a structure.

HDC thanks the Commission for undertaking what has not been the easiest designation so far. It is often the hardest tasks that are the most worthwhile. We urge you to finish the hard work with a well-deserved vote to designate this fantastic building as a New York City landmark.