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Testimony of Councilmember Bill de Blasio before the  
Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding Public Hearing Item No. 1, LP-2338,  
West Park Presbyterian Church, 165 West 86th Street aka 165-167 West 86th Street; 541  
Amsterdam Avenue, Manhattan.

July 14, 2009

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. I am Councilmember Bill de Blasio, and I represent Brooklyn's 39th Council district. I would like to express my strong support for landmarking West-Park Presbyterian Church, as well as express concern for the broader issue of the preservation of threatened sacred sites raised by today's hearing.

West-Park Presbyterian Church is not only a striking and distinguishing anchor of the upper west side, but it is considered by preservationists to be one of the best examples of a Romanesque Revival style structure in the City. I enthusiastically encourage the Landmarks Preservation Commission to include West-Park Presbyterian Church among New York City's Landmarks, due to its architectural merit and significance to the historical fabric of New York City.

While I am very pleased by the Landmarks Preservation Commission's decision to hear the case of West-Park Presbyterian, I would like to note that this church is one example of many throughout the City that deserve serious consideration for landmark status. West-Park Presbyterian Church powerfully illustrates the broader need to examine and consider undertaking preservation efforts for additional sites of unique historical and architectural significance throughout the five boroughs.

Preserving the rich and diverse architectural character of our City will require a more comprehensive approach to endangered sacred sites. From synagogues in Borough Park and Bay Ridge, to churches in Vinegar Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant, this is as much a local issue for Brooklyn as it is a citywide issue. Without a proactive approach to the issue of landmark status, our City risks losing these significant sites to the pressures of redevelopment or the effects of physical deterioration and neglect.

I applaud the Landmarks Preservation Commission for holding today's hearing, and hope that the Commission will landmark West-Park Presbyterian Church as well as begin approaching this as a broader, pressing challenge that requires a citywide approach before we lose countless sacred sites.