

**THE NEW YORK
LANDMARKS
CONSERVANCY**

May 13, 2008

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE N.Y.C.
LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED WEST
CHELSEA HISTORIC DISTRICT.**

Good day, Chair Tierney and Commissioners. I am Ken Lustbader speaking on behalf of The New York Landmarks Conservancy.

The Conservancy has visited the proposed district and reviewed the documentation prepared by the Commission. We strongly support this designation and commend the agency's proactive steps to protect this significant and intact part of New York's industrial heritage.

The West Chelsea Historic District contains approximately 30 structures ranging from mid-sized factories, large terminals, and low-scale buildings that embody the industrial activities that drove the city's development and economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The mostly brick-faced buildings include important examples of industrial architecture that were home to some of the city's and Nation's most prestigious firms. The area's geographic proximity to the waterfront and railways goes hand-and-hand with its development as a neighborhood of warehouses, factories, and garages. Despite the decline of industrial activities in the mid-20th century, the proposed district retains almost all of the buildings related to this history.

The Conservancy believes the Commission is setting an important example in continuing to protect the city's industrial heritage. Although often underappreciated, these buildings represent an important part of our nation's architectural, economic, and social past – they were the engines that helped drive New York's economy in the 19th and 20th centuries.

As we have seen in other cities, designation of industrial neighborhoods has created successfully synergies between the private sector, not-for-profit organizations, and cultural groups for reuse opportunities that economically benefit landlords, tenants, and the city at large.

Protection of West Chelsea is important given the nearby redevelopment of the nearby High-Line; however there are 50 other potential historic districts that are waiting to be heard. We urge the Commission to move on these quickly.

In conclusion, the Conservancy supports the designation of the West Chelsea Historic District for its contribution to New York's industrial, maritime, and transportation past.

Thank you for the opportunity to present The New York Landmarks Conservancy's views.