

**THE NEW YORK
LANDMARKS
CONSERVANCY**

September 9, 2008

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE
THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
REGARDING THE PROPOSED NEW GARAGE AND PARK SPACE IN THE
EXISTING COURTYARD AT 20-34 JORALEMON STREET IN THE
BROOKLYN HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Good day, Chairman Tierney and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

The Riverside Apartments complex at 20-34 Joralemon Street (1890) holds a unique place in the history of New York City housing. Commissioned by the businessman and reformer Alfred T. White, it is one of the earliest examples of model housing for working-class families. Unlike the majority of tenements built in that era, it features substantial access to light and air in the residential units thanks to the exterior staircases and the open courtyard. While the complex was altered by construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway immediately behind it, the extant buildings and courtyard retain their historic integrity.

The proposal in question reframes an earlier plan for a multi-level, above-ground garage; however it would still considerably alter the courtyard space with its raised garden, the installation of the attendant's structure and exit ramp, as well as the introduction of parking activity as much as 24 hours a day. The Conservancy appreciates the way that the proposed new garden features would improve the landscape; but these improvements do not mitigate the change of the courtyard from a peaceful reminder of 19th-century reformist ideals to a busy commercial enterprise.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that there is a potential for archeological findings from the 18th and 19th centuries underground at the courtyard which would be disturbed by the required excavation. While the developers have their own report on this issue, we would suggest additional exploration be undertaken before the site is demolished.

There has been enough damage done to this complex over the years; we would not want to see it further degraded by the installation of a garage with all of the associated noise and pollution, in addition to the loss of the historic courtyard. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Conservancy's views.