

THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY

March 25, 2019

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION 2019

Good evening Chair Benjamin and Commission members. I am Peg Breen, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is a 46-year old organization dedicated to preserving, revitalizing, and reusing New York's architectural resources. Preservation is vital to the City's economy, tourism, and quality of life. We appreciate that this Commission looking into ways the City's Landmarks Preservation Commission may be strengthened and improved.

New York's Landmarks Preservation Commission is one of the strongest and most effective preservation agencies in the country. It has always worked to maintain the dynamic mix of old and new that makes New York unique.

The Conservancy commissioned the first comprehensive study on the economic impacts of preservation in New York City two years ago. The data-based report found tremendous benefits. More than \$800 million is invested annually in New York's historic buildings, creating 9,000 jobs and providing paychecks of over \$500 million each year. Heritage tourism is a major component of the City's visitor industry, providing jobs for 130,000 New Yorkers.

The study shows that the LPC has done its job. But we believe that the LPC would be even more successful with several improvements.

The Charter should make clear that the Commission has binding authority over City-owned landmarks, including schools. Important buildings such as the Erasmus Hall Academy in Brooklyn and Frederick Law Olmsted's Home in Staten Island suffered substantial deterioration under the neglect of the agencies responsible for them. LPC takes action against demolition by neglect on private buildings, it should do the same when the City fails to maintain landmark properties.

The Department of Buildings recently agreed to notify LPC if DOB applications for alteration or demolition were submitted for properties the Commission is considering for designation. We would like to see that agreement codified.

We believe Commissioners should be compensated for the considerable time they devote to their duties. Finally, we recommend that at least one Commissioner be required to have a background in preservation.

When the Law was established, preservation was a new field. Now preservation has been professionalized. Certainly, preservation architects have and do serve with distinction. And Sarah Carroll has a Masters degree in preservation. The field should be formalized in the Charter.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.