

CB9 Landmarks Preservation & Parks Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 2, 2019

Called to Order: 6:45PM

West Harlem Historic District Survey - Yuien Chin, Liz Waytkus, & John Reddick

- *Recipients of a National Park Service grant to conduct a survey of West Harlem from 135th to 155th Streets and from west of Amsterdam to Riverside Drive - CPO (community preservation organization) received this grant*
- *Survey is for obtaining state historic designation and being placed on its historic register*
 - *This survey is the first step and has already received from SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) a Determination of Eligibility to move forward*
 - *The next step would be the city - this survey is needed in order to eventually present research to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) - it helps to loop in the state when presenting before the city in the future*
- *Survey will help preserve the historic fabric and cultural legacy as the the historic designation offers rich tax credits, etc. for rehabilitation or adaptive reuse*
- *Notes from the presentation:*
 - *Riverside Drive was elevated to offers views of the Hudson mid-river, obscuring the industrial waterfront that existed at the start of the 20th century*
 - *1904 IRT line ushers development along Broadway - most buildings in the survey area were built at the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century - only a handful of buildings were built in the 1930s*
 - *Most of the apartment buildings have their architectural features (cornices, ornamental elements, etc.) intact except for the original front doors*
 - *A film titled "El Super" (1979) shows buildings along 137th Street*
 - *LPC is aware that this survey is currently being conducted and the Manhattan Borough President's Office (MBPO) is supportive*
 - *Yuien informs the committee that Ashkenazy's grandfather is deeply involved in historic preservation work and this is something to consider with regard to the RKO Hamilton Theater, currently owned by Ashkenazy*
 - *Volunteers will be needed to photograph the area for the survey*
 - *Key Harlem icons will be memorialized by placing historic markers on specific buildings*
 - *George Gershwin - composer/pianist*
 - *Philippa Schuyler - pianist/composer/journalist/author*
 - *Mary Lou Williams - jazz pianist/composer*
 - *Billy Strayhorn - openly gay jazz composer/pianist*
 - *Barbara Lee historic marker was cited as a model to follow*
 - *SHPO survey will likely take 1 ½ years*

- *Once the area is eligible funds will become available*
 - *Survey generates community interest*
 - *Substantial benefits being on the historic register in terms of tax credits*
- *CB9 Landmark Preservation & Parks Committee (LP&P) has its own historic preservation efforts such as the following:*
 - *Memorial Plaque at newly constructed pond at Morningside Park - the pond was not original the Olmsted designed plan and was for decades an open crater - this blast site was created in 1968 for Columbia University's planned 9-story gymnasium. Columbia University was taking over 2 acres of parkland and its gymnasium was called by student activists and Harlem residents "Gym Crow" because the design had two separate entrances - one for university students and one for Harlem residents - the plaque would honor the Harlem community activists and Columbia students who defeated this measure*
 - *Frank White Memorial for the Frank White Memorial Garden on 143rd Street - Frank White was an upstanding member of the Harlem community who was shot in the 1970s - importance of honoring regular community members and not just well known or highly acclaimed historic Harlem figures*
 - *Survey of the historic monuments in Community Board 9 - of particular importance are 1) Daniel Butterfield statue in Sakura Park - apart from corruption also has business ties and a family fortune tied to the dispossession of Native American lands during the construction of the railroads and the "Indian Wars" carried out to build them among other things; 2) Samuel Tilden at 112th Street on Riverside Drive mall - a 1876 Democratic presidential candidate who helped end Reconstruction in the South and a lawyer whose primary business was in railroads at the height of the Indian Wars*
- *It is recommended that the committee look at the information panels at Grant's Tomb and the panels at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine*

142nd Street Dog Run

- *John Reddick states that 10-15 years ago that the dog run was originally intended for the narrow green area at the entrance of an abandoned pathway at 143rd Street near a small derelict shed with no roof - 143rd Street Riverside Park hilly green area was also considered - reach out to Margaret Bracken who conceived of a landscape design for the area*