

New York Public Library, Harlem Branch

**9 West 124th Street (aka 9-11 West 124th Street), Manhattan
Tax Map Block 1722 Lot 30**

Built: 1907-09

Architect: McKim, Mead & White

Style: Classical Revival

Proposed Action: Propose for Calendaring, February 2, 2020



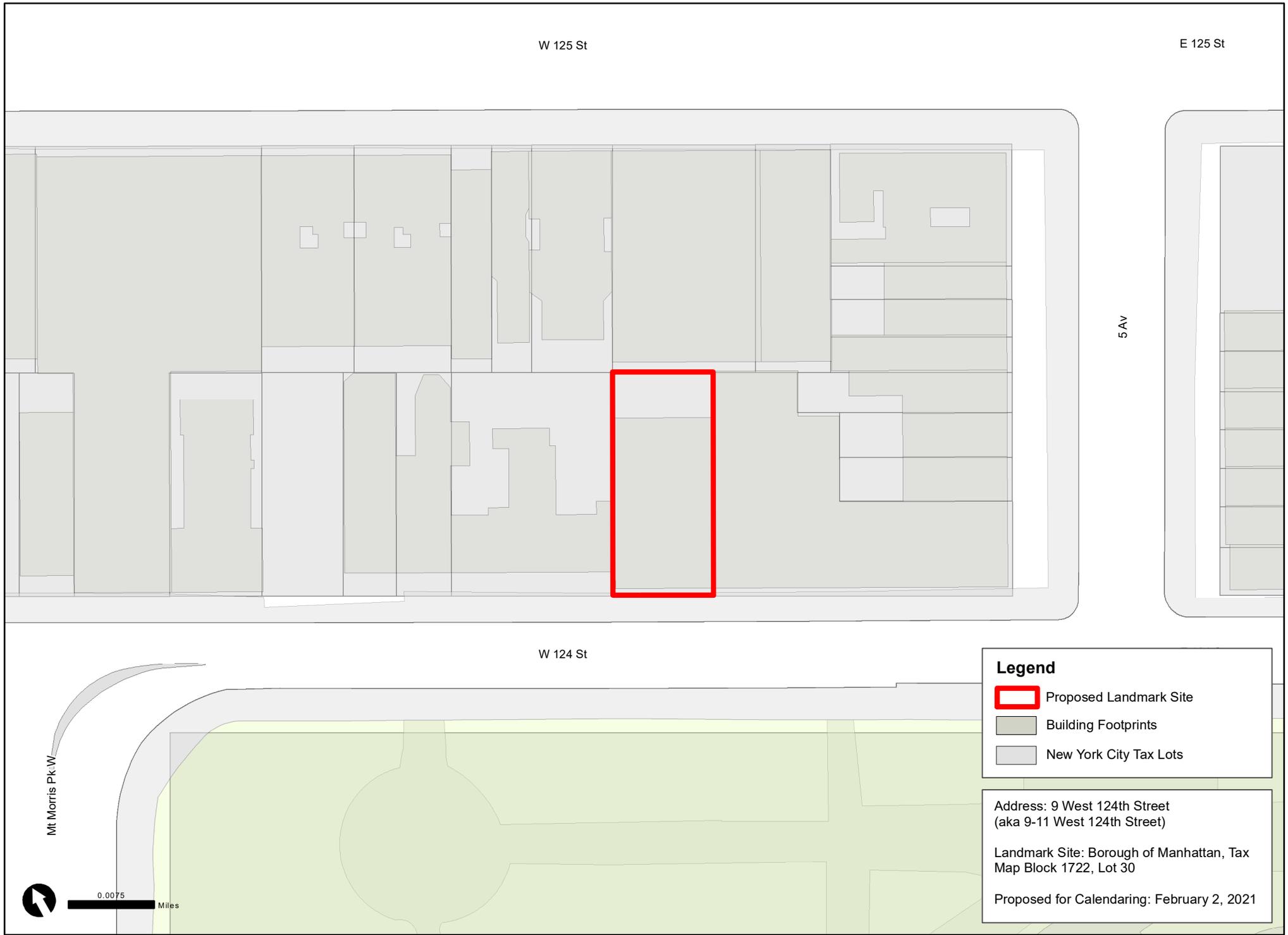
New York Public Library, Harlem Branch LPC, 2014

Located on West 124th Street across from Marcus Garvey Park (formerly Mount Morris Park), the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library is one of 67 circulating libraries constructed for the city's three public library systems in the early 20th century with funding from steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. The elegant Classical Revival style building was designed by the prominent architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White in 1907 and opened in 1909, one of twelve Carnegie libraries designed by the firm for the New York Public Library, including five in Harlem.

The circulating library that became the New York Public Library's Harlem Branch was originally established as a privately-operated subscription library in 1825 when Harlem was an isolated village then centered around Third Avenue. As development increased in Harlem in the late 19th century, the Harlem Library Association purchased a lot at 32 West 123rd Street where the trustees erected a four-story building (Edgar K. Bourne, 1891-92, located within the Mount Morris Park Historic District) with the library on the ground floor and bachelor apartments above for added income. The Harlem Library became a free circulating library in 1897 when it dropped its subscription fees and in 1903 it merged with the New York Public Library's circulating branch system which had been established in 1901.

Built at a time when Harlem was still predominantly a white residential neighborhood, the Harlem Branch served as an important resource to the neighborhood as it became the most prominent African American neighborhood in the United States and continues to serve the Harlem community today. The Black actor/playwright Ossie Davis who performed with the Rose McClendon Players Workshop based in the Harlem Branch referred to the library as "the only home I had... the very temple of my existence, my craft, the place that trained me, the first institution to welcome me."

The library's limestone facade is raised on a low granite base and features large recessed arched openings at the first and second stories, decorated with rosettes at the first story and alternating roundels and diamond-shaped lozenges at the second. The window openings of the third story are flatheaded with simple surrounds slightly recessed from the plane of the wall. Two-story-tall pilasters with Corinthian capitals frame the fenestration of the second and third stories, their bases resting on a denticulated sill course at the second story. Below the denticulated cornice, the frieze bears the words "New York Public Library" separated by plaques in the form of open books with fleur-de-lis. Between 2002 and 2004 the library underwent a renovation that included minimal sensitive alterations to the exterior, including the replacement of the entrance door and windows, and the addition of an access ramp that entailed reconfiguring the stone stoop.



Legend

-  Proposed Landmark Site
-  Building Footprints
-  New York City Tax Lots

Address: 9 West 124th Street
(aka 9-11 West 124th Street)

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1722, Lot 30

Proposed for Calendaring: February 2, 2021