



Bricks & Mortals

April 27, 2022

Ms. Sarah Carroll
Chair
The Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Center Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: West-Park Presbyterian Church
165 West 86th Street, Manhattan
LPC #-22-09135

Dear Chair Carroll:

Bricks & Mortals is a non-denominational, not-for-profit corporation that helps houses of worship thrive by providing creative and sustaining solutions that support their mission and benefit the communities they serve. Founded in 2015 by a group of concerned clergy and lay leaders, it has grown into an organization that sponsors educational training, connects congregations to experts and financial resources, advocates for and raises public awareness of issues affecting faith-based communities.

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission has been a national leader in the preservation movement, and the City has benefitted from its efforts. With more than 37,600 landmark properties in the City, it is the largest municipal preservation agency in the country. There is great value in the work of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, but there are also additional responsibilities levied on property owners of properties under the Landmarks Preservation Commission's jurisdiction.

Our membership is intimately familiar with the heavy responsibility of owning and maintaining an NYC landmarked property. Though there are some city and private programs to help alleviate this burden, these efforts are not robust enough to truly preserve and protect the City's storied houses of worship. Our membership supports the preservation of their important structures, but equally supports the opportunity to create viable options for houses of worship when preservation of the original structure is no longer feasible. Bricks & Mortals supports these dual goals whether those houses of worship are deemed historically significant or not.

The West-Park is a prime example of a house of worship in need of a different option and Bricks & Mortals supports its hardship application before the Landmarks Commission.

West-Park Presbyterian Church

The West-Park Presbyterian Church was founded in 1852 on 84th Street and West End Avenue and has been at its current location since 1885. Since then, it has proudly served as the spiritual home for thousands of Upper West Siders. Notably in the 1980's it was one of the first churches of its denomination to welcome the LGBTQ community during the AIDS crisis, and God's Love We Deliver began using its kitchen to prepare meals in 1987. It was home to nuclear disarmament groups SANE and FREEZE, was active in the formation of West Side Campaign Against Hunger and many other service organizations.

Today, the landmark church has become a millstone around its neck. Building repairs have nearly bankrupted the Church, which has been without a pastor since 2018. It is now at a crossroads - whether to be dragged under by overwhelming building maintenance costs, or to pursue a hardship exemption — a plan that will doubtless be opposed by many in the preservation community. But this is a choice between the survival of a 160-year old institution and the attempted restoration of a landmark at astronomical expense.

The Importance of West-Park

The City's sacred and secular institutions serve its citizens and give neighborhoods a sense of place. Houses of worship like West-Park are an important example of such institutions. They have evolved over time, away from grand edifices used almost exclusively for worship into spaces that embrace and support community groups, arts programs, programs for youth and the elderly, and shelter for the repressed and disadvantaged. Many churches have literally "taken out the pews" to make room for a wider range of uses.

Today, according to NYC Planning and the Department of Finance, faith-based organizations deliver 40% of vital human services in cities. Religious properties in New York City host 1,100 community resources, and 26% of city-contracted senior services are provided by religious institutions or community services with historic beginnings in the religious community. These are millions of dollars in economic impact for services that the City would otherwise have to provide.

In addition to a congregation's primary function as a place for worship, there are also extraordinary benefits to its neighbors. Partners for Sacred Places has analyzed the economic "Halo Effect" of religious properties and found that the average urban sacred site generates over \$1.7 million in economic impact annually, and 87% of the beneficiaries are not members of the religious congregation. The "Halo Effect" of Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, for example, is an astounding \$10 million.

Sadly, the West-Park building has been considered unsafe to pedestrians for over 20 years and continues to worsen. The physical deterioration of West Park is not due to mismanagement or neglect, but rather the unfortunate reality of the costs of building maintenance outpacing its congregants' means.

The Landmarks Law allows for not-for-profit property owners of landmarked property, facing dire conditions, to apply for a demolition permit based on the hardship condition that the property is no longer suitable for the not-for-profit's use. We understand that there is a high standard of review

and approval of these hardship applications and Bricks & Mortals supports the rigorous review that the Landmarks Commission requires of not-for-profit applicants seeking a hardship demolition. The hardship demolition should only be granted in extreme situations. However, when those very strict conditions are met, the Landmarks Preservation Commission has a statutory obligation to grant a demolition permit based on hardship.

If there is a denial of West-Park's hardship application, the tragedy would be a building that would continue to deteriorate and a religious organization with no assets to continue its important work in the community. A sale of the building, in its current condition and limited to its current façade, would leave the church with no place for worship, with no funds to support its mission, and would inevitably lead to the dissolution of a congregation that has served the Upper West Side community for over 160 years.

Without a hardship exemption, West-Park will almost certainly have to disband. But with a new, maintenance-free place for worship, facilities to serve its community, and funding for outreach and other programs, it can grow and thrive again. The cost is not inconsiderable, but the goals of historic preservation would not be served if a 160-year old institution is sacrificed at the altar of a crumbling building that is beyond repair.

Very truly yours,

BRICKS AND MORTALS

Donna Schaper



The Rev. Dr. Donna Schaper
Co-Chair

Jason Labate
Co-Chair

Cc: Commissioners - Landmarks Preservation Commission
Hon. Gale Brewer, New York City Council Member, District 6
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Steven M. Brown, Chair, Manhattan Community Board 7
Peg Breen, President, Landmarks Conservancy

145 Tenants Corp.

May 2, 2022

Dear Shareholders:

Your Board discussed West Park Presbyterian's application to demolish its current structure on the corner of 86th Street and Columbus Avenue extensively and concluded that the scaffolding and state of disrepair makes our block less safe, is an eyesore, and negatively impacts the value of all the properties on this street.

Your Board believes that it is appropriate for the Board to take an official position supporting the Church's request to demolish and rebuild a new building that will contain worship space, arts space, and residential space.

Below is a link outlining the Church's petition and proposal:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/manhattancb7/downloads/pdf/2022/West-Park-Presbyterian-Church-Presentation-Information.pdf>

The matter will be discussed at a **Special Meeting of the Preservation Committee**, to be held on Thursday, May 5, 6:30 pm.

It is a virtual meeting. To participate, please visit [Manhattan Community Board 7 \(nyc.gov\)](#).

Go to "Meetings" Tab [Full Board Agenda - Manhattan Community Board 7 \(nyc.gov\)](#)

Click on "Committee Agendas" [Committee Agendas - Manhattan Community Board 7 \(nyc.gov\)](#)

Click on "Join the May 5th Special Meeting" [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

Complete form to register. Click "Register".

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter that effects all of our homes.

Very truly yours,

The Board of Directors

PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK CITY

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New York, NY 10115-0240

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May 25, 2022

Steven M. Brown, Chair,
Manhattan Community Board 7
250 West 87th Street
New York, NY 10024

Dear Mr. Brown and members of Community Board 7,

I am the Rev. Dr. Robert Foltz-Morrison, the Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of New York City. Our office is located in The Interchurch Center, across the street from the Riverside Church.

I am writing in support of the West Park Presbyterian Church's hardship application. As a community of faith, a religious corporation in the State of New York, it has the right to request a hardship clause from the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I hope the Community Board will support that right.

For more than 140 years the members of West Park undertook their constitutional responsibility as a Presbyterian Church to carry the costs of maintaining the building while undertaking their commitment to faithful practices for which they established themselves on the Upper West Side.

I am grateful persons in this community recognize and have benefitted by what this congregation chose to do in, for, and with this community and the City of New York. It came from generations of Presbyterians committed then, and today, to deliver God's love and justice where such was most needed.

But the congregation's right to pursue this mission with a sustainable future in which it can continue its progressive witness has been undermined.

The community rallied against the church vote in 2009 to preserve a sanctuary on the corner of West 86th and Amsterdam Avenue and put up a mix of affordable and market rate housing on part of its owned property, by landmarking the entire property. Thousands of square feet for proposed community space were lost.

While the community and the Landmark Preservation Commission prevailed in 2010 over the right of the West Park Church to determine its future, *it provided no sustainable financial plan to help the congregation maintain the burden of the encumbrance the City and community placed upon it.* Full of church-state contradictions, politicians and community members said then they could, then later said they could not, provide funding for the preservation of a church building they had encumbered.

The condition of the edifice of the West Park Presbyterian Church is not the result of congregation or Presbytery neglect. The congregation sought to undertake its responsibility to maintain its building and its mission. The congregation created and leased space to the Center at West Park to reflect a God-given talent for creativity, justice, and aesthetic expression, going so far as to subsidize its operations with its scarce resources. More than a million dollars was spent for the upkeep of the building.

Over the past decade the membership of the congregation dwindled, being dispirited by having to spend more of its time and energy asking members to pay for sustaining the preservation of a now landmarked building. Encumbered by the City's landmarked laws and facing the depletion of all funds, the West Park Church in 2017 could no longer fund a pastor. The congregation is now out of money and is in debt.

The Presbytery, with representatives of its 89 churches in the five boroughs of New York City, mostly small, mostly churches of color, does not have the assets to cover even half of the cost of repairing this one church's façade. The Presbytery's annual budget for grants to churches for building repairs is less than \$100,000 per year, compared to the \$50 million it would cost to restore the entire building.

At the request of the West Park congregation, the Presbytery voted to establish an Administrative Commission to assist the church in selling its landmarked building. For more than a year the Commission worked with the congregation's governing board, engineers, real estate appraisers, and developers to explore options. This Commission of the Presbytery has requested that the Landmarks Preservation Commission "un-landmark" the building so there would be a more sustainable future for this religious organization on the site to which it has title. In March, the congregation voted unanimously in favor of the Presbytery's Administrative Commission's plan.

If the hardship application is approved, the proceeds from the sale of the property will provide (i) the needed resources to revitalize a storied congregation that has compassionately served the community and City for over 140 years, (ii) a permanent home for worship and the arts on the Upper West Side, and (iii) endowed funding to the Presbytery to support its churches throughout the City in feeding the hungry, housing those without homes, and projects for adaptive reuse of church property for affordable housing and community services.

"Church" in its original Greek meaning is an "assembly of people," not a building.

I ask the Community Board to commit their support for this application.

Thank you,

The Rev. Dr. Robert Foltz-Morrison
Executive Presbyter
Presbytery of New York City

cc: Ms. Sarah Carroll, The Landmarks Preservation Commission
Hon. Gale Brewer, New York City Council Member, District 6
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President

To whom it may concern:

I am in favor of the de-landmarking West Park.

My name is Dion Thompson, an elder of West Park Presbyterian Church, and a member of the congregation at West Park for over ten years. I've always loved not only what we stand for but who we stand with. I have a strong allegiance to the historic building. If the walls could talk, the words would speak of so many spiritual, social, personal, artistic significant impacts in the UWS community. I believe it has always been more about the people and love than the place and its space that reflected the most beauty.

It is officially acknowledged how we have exhausted our resources trying to sustain and maintain a house that is deteriorating. We never received any of the promised support from the community since the building was landmarked. Just like at that time, the community said it didn't want anything torn down, yet nobody wants to put anything up or substantially contribute anything to help in the preservation of the structure. Now its restorative price tag has increased and the façade has only gotten worse. There is a scaffold around the building since prior to the Landmarking that has been an eyesore and an exorbitant, recurring monthly rental expenditure, the shed was bought out by the church and was recently removed in its entirety and replaced the entire shed again due to it being unsafe and falling apart per a DOT fine. Now the new shed is installed back on a rental basis.

I am totally in favor of having the church be sold and allowing the money mainly go to all of the other Presbyterian church is to help many underserved and needy and needing people throughout New York City. It would also allow the congregation here which is now broke the opportunity to have seed money to continue mission of the church and share the gospel and grow. One of the positive long running community safe space ongoing events that is offered at the site is an open mic which serves many valuable purposes highlighting of mission of acceptance, love, interaction, personal and spiritual growth and freedom of expression. It has never been about the bottom line or seen as a business.

Once again I hope that the church is allowed to remove the landmark status and the developers can offer their bid as I believe there will be a far greater impact on many lives in New York City and within the church then the measly offer put on the table by the Center to acquire the building that they have not shown they can invest in to restore and fix prior to the City condemning.

Speaking on behalf of the church, we appreciate that the Center has done and does for the world of arts and our desires continuing a collaborative relationship

No matter what the eventual outcome is we just hope it's a honorable decision that suits the best interest of all parties concerned.

Sincerely, Dion Thompson

Letter to Community Board 7, Manhattan

June 2, 2022

As Vice-Chair of the Justice Ministries Committee (JMC) of the Presbytery of New York City, I am writing in support of the West Park Presbyterian Church's hardship application. As a community of faith, a religious corporation in the State of New York, West Park has the right to request a hardship clause from the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I hope the Community Board will support that right.

I write this as the interim pastor of a small Presbyterian church in Forest Hills, one of the 90 Presbyterian churches within the Presbytery of New York City. While some may associate the Presbyterians with the larger Manhattan churches, most of our congregations are quite small, with 100 members or less.

One of the economic realities facing New York City and its churches is the fallout of the COVID pandemic. Many churches have closed, or will close in the near future, as members have stopped attending (and some have died, sadly). While this does not hit the news media, it is a reality people like me confront regularly, which also affects the West Park Presbyterian Church.

While the West Park Presbyterian Church may be a landmark building, the congregation itself is struggling financially. Unless the city can somehow supply the funding to keep up the building (which it legally cannot do), there is nothing the congregation can do to keep the building intact. Those who enjoy the architecture will have to fund it in some way, as the church cannot.

In Presbyterian theology, the building is not the church. The people are the church. The building is where the church meets. However ornate or historic the building may be, it is not the church. The building does not minister to people - the church does.

If the hardship application is approved, the proceeds from the sale of the property will benefit the neediest throughout the City by providing endowed funding to the Presbytery to support its churches in their social justice initiatives --feeding the hungry, housing those without homes, and adaptive reuse of church property for affordable housing and community services, as well as many other projects.

On behalf of the Justice Ministries Committee, I ask that the Community Board commit their support for this application. Thank you.

Blessings -

Rev. Jeffrey Courter

First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills NY

Letter to Community Board 7, Manhattan

June 2, 2022

I am the chair of the Justice Ministries Committee (JMC) of the Presbytery of New York City. The mission of the JMC is to support social justice initiatives of Presbyterian worshipping communities and their neighborhoods in all five boroughs. We partner with other non-profits as well as multi-faith groups on many social justice issues to advocate for reforms in criminal justice, immigration, housing/homelessness, reproductive choice, climate/environment, gun safety, voting rights, etc. JMC sees up close how economic, racial and gender/identity disparities have profound negative impacts on the City's less-resourced communities. Hardships in poor communities of color have only increased since the pandemic. Small churches are struggling to provide food banks, services for the elderly and youth, homeless initiatives and many other community programs serving their neighbors. The Presbytery needs more resources to support these programs.

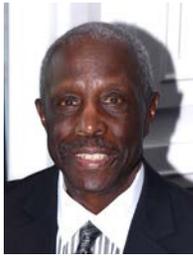
I am writing in support of the West Park Presbyterian Church's hardship application. As a community of faith, a religious corporation in the State of New York, West Park has the right to request a hardship clause from the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I hope the Community Board will support that right.

I am grateful persons on the Upper West Side recognize and have benefitted from West Park's work in, for, and with this community and the City of New York. This commitment came from generations of Presbyterians dedicated then, and today, to deliver God's love and justice. But this congregation and the Presbytery can no longer financially sustain maintaining the church building on West 86th and Amsterdam. And since the 2010 landmark designation – more than a decade -- no supporters of that designation have provided a sustainable financial plan to help the congregation and the Presbytery maintain the burden of the encumbrance the City placed upon it. Instead, the financial burden has fallen on the congregation and the Presbytery, and more than a million dollars was spent for the upkeep of the building. The congregation is out of money and in debt. The Presbytery, with representatives of its 89 churches in the five boroughs of New York City, mostly small, mostly churches of color, does not have the assets to cover even half of the cost of repairing this one church's façade. The Presbytery's annual budget for grants to churches for building repairs is less than \$100,000 per year, compared to the many millions it would cost to restore the entire building.

If the hardship application is approved, the proceeds from the sale of the property will benefit the neediest throughout the City by providing endowed funding to the Presbytery to support its churches in their social justice initiatives --feeding the hungry, housing those without homes, and adaptive reuse of church property for affordable housing and community services, as well as many other projects.

The Justice Ministries Committee asks that the Community Board commit their support for this application. Thank you,

Brenda Berkman
Chair, Justice Ministries Committee
Presbytery of New York City



Lloyd R. Johnson

May 26, 2022

Steven M. Brown, Chair
Manhattan Community Board 7 – NYC
250 West 87th Street
New York, NY 10024

Dear Mr. Brown

I am a member of Eastchester Presbyterian Church, Bronx NY. I am writing to support West Park Presbyterian Church's hardship application. As a ruling elder since 1970, I have been active in the life of the Presbytery of New York City and I am familiar with most of our churches. I have become more familiar with WPPC having preached to the congregation fifteen times since January 2021.

My hope is that Community Board 7 will support the church's right to a hardship clause from the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The members of West Park Presbyterian Church (WPPC) have tried to maintain the church building since its construction in 1889 and more intently since 2010. They are to be congratulated for their work, through good financial times and bad. The community known as the Upper West Side is grateful for the existence of the WPPC and its contribution to the community through carrying out its mission.

I understand that because promises outside of the church's control were not kept and WPPC can no longer maintain the building and live up to the expectation of the LPC. As has happened in Christian churches throughout the country, membership in this denomination and WPPC in particular has dwindled. The few remaining members do not have the financial resources to maintain the building. In WPPC's effort to maintain a presence in the community to carry out its mission, what little finances currently available are needed to keep the building from falling apart altogether.

The mission of Christian churches is to improve the lot of God's people. We preach good news to the poor and relief to those who find themselves with their backs against the wall. WPPC would love to fulfill the requirements of the LPC, but West Park Presbyterian Church cannot. The church seeks justice, tempered with mercy.

Please support the West Park Presbyterian Church's application.

Yours truly

Lloyd R. Johnson

LRJ:dre

Copies to: Ms. Sarah Carroll, The Landmarks Preservation Commission
Hon. Gale Brewer, New York City Council Member, District 6
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President

201 East 17th Street, #12B
New York, NY 10003
June 1, 2022

Steven M. Brown, Chair
Manhattan Community Board 7
250 West 87th Street
New York, NY 10024

Dear Mr. Brown:

I am writing in support of the hardship application being presented by the congregation at West Park Presbyterian Church, located at 165 West 86th Street, for your Board's consideration before submitting it to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Although I do not reside within the CB 7 neighborhood, I am familiar with the extraordinary social justice work the congregation has done within your community (and beyond) over many decades. I am also familiar with the splendid building that has been hidden by a sidewalk bridge for much too long. It is regrettable that the church can no longer sustain either its active mission nor its landmarked building.

The building, regardless of its striking architecture, has never been the West Park church. The church has been the congregation and its outreach to, and presence in, your community. For the church to continue within your neighborhood, it needs funds to continue its mission outreach, funds that can become available through the sale of the church building at a fair price. During these last ten years while the building has been landmarked, the finances and health of the congregation have become only bleaker. While the church's leasing space to The Center has benefitted the arts community and the Upper West Side in countless ways, The Center's efforts have not proven successful in helping the church sustain itself. There are many human needs in your neighborhood that the church could minister to if it had the financial resources to sustain itself and refocus itself on "being" church – by re-extending its missional efforts, and perhaps even helping its sister churches, like the one I attend that provides outreach services to the homeless and hungry in mid-town Manhattan, carry out social justice programs in many parts of the City.

Sincerely,


Lynn Wishart

c: Ms. Sarah Carroll, The Landmarks Preservation Commission
Hon. Gale Brewer, New York City Council Member, District 6
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President



June 1, 2022

Steven M. Brown, Chair, Manhattan Community Board 7
250 West 87th Street
New York, NY 10024

Dear Manhattan Community Board 7,

I am writing as a member of the Presbytery and as Senior Minister of The Brick Presbyterian Church in the City of New York. Our congregation is located on the Upper East Side in Manhattan. I am reaching out in support of West Park Church selling their building.

We at The Brick Presbyterian Church are blessed to have a thriving Day School and congregation. The generosity of heart and giving of mission-minded people has been a great strength on which for us to lean. However, in the past year alone, The Brick Presbyterian Church has seen the following: an entire floor / highly utilized area was flooded – not once, but three times; a mechanical part went out in a boiler that heats our building, causing a costly repair; and we had to replace an elevator that did not meet code. These are just a very small sample of the long list of high price tag repairs that we have seen just recently.

Why am I telling you all of this? Because if we have faced all these unforeseen issues here at Brick Church, then I am confident that the responsible, hard-working caretakers and parishioners of the West Park Presbyterian Church building are also up against an expensive and exhaustive laundry list of repairs as well, despite the million dollars that were poured into the valiant upkeep of the building. Without the financial support needed, I can only imagine that they are not only unable to meet unexpected costly repairs, but that the \$50 million restoration is just flat out not doable.

Furthermore, please consider supporting this application as the sale of this location will benefit the community more than this building is. The purpose and mission of the Church is to be a light of hope to the community. A freeing of resources, not being held back by the burden of a struggling building, would allow the congregation of the West Park Church to pour out into the community in new ways.

I support the sale of this building and ask that you do too.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Thomas E. Evans
Senior Minister
The Brick Presbyterian Church
62 East 92nd Street
New York, NY 10128
Tel.: 212-289-4400, ext. 245
tevens@brickchurch.org

THE REV. THOMAS LAWRENCE
Member At Large, NYC Presbytery
63 Dubois Avenue
Staten Island, New York 10310
(718) 852-2281
tllawrence@mindspring.com

May 31, 2022

Community Board 7 (Manhattan):
Steven M. Brown, Chair, Manhattan Community Board 7
250 West 87th Street
New York City 10024

Dear Chairman Brown:

I am writing as a Member-At-Large of New York City Presbytery in support for West Park Presbyterian Church's plan to sell their building which is no longer sustainable. The congregation has tried to maintain the building at the cost of the Presbytery's mission. It makes sense now to release the church from the burden of maintaining a building and use the resulting sale assets to support the various missions of the churches throughout the Presbytery as well as to revitalize West Park Church.

The proceeds of sale will be shared with churches in the Presbytery of New York City In support of their good works. West Park will have a chance for renewal and the community will have a space for art and other activities that promote the common good.

Having served First Presbyterian Church of Ozone Park as Pulpit Supply Pastor for five years, I am certain that FPC Ozone Park would be able to extend their ministry to the surrounding community more effectively than they have heretofore been able.

Sincerely yours,

The Rev. Thomas Lawrence

cc: Ms. Sarah Carroll, The Landmarks Preservation Commission
Hon. Gale Brewer, New York City Council Member, District 6
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President

Preservation Committee
Community Board 7
via email to brooke@capalino.com
May 25, 2022

Re: The Hardship Application by West-Park Presbyterian Church

My name is Jim Nedelka. I am a Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and, unfortunately, have been unable to attend any of the CB 7 meetings due to conflicting schedules, which prompts this letter.

I rise in support of the Hardship Application my fellow Presbyterians at West-Park have filed.

20 years ago, I was chair of the congregation's *Rebuild for Rebirth* building committee when, against the will of our congregation, landmark status was shoved on the West-Park Church property at 165 West 86th Street, at the time an as-of-right property.

Frankly, if the all the promised community and financial support made to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to the NY City Council during a televised hearing, to approve the forced landmarking had been delivered, *Rebuild for Rebirth* would be a reality and CB 7 would be celebrating more than 10 years of community service!

Instead, its déjà vu.

To be precise, despite the open, congregation-sponsored design campaign in 2004, a week of “come see the designs,” with the winning design by FGCA, led by architect Erika Franke, featured in full color on the front page of the [NY Times Real Estate section](#), the congregation was literally left at the altar by the combined campaign against us.

The players back then are the same today: *Landmarks West!* fragments of the neighborhood group called the “Friends of West-Park” – among their vigilante efforts: plastering a totally false design in neighborhood laundromats and delis as well as the forming of a 501(c) 3 in the congregation’s name *unknownst* to the congregation,

then ruthlessly traded on our name to raise fund to *fight* our plans!

I note that architect Paige Ayers Cowley is also part of this campaign. Her comment at the time was that Erika Franke’s design was somehow “not in keeping” with the neighborhood. Considering the designs of the under-construction additions to the Museum of Natural History, I will repeat our congregation’s response: we saw Ms. Franke had correctly gauged the neighborhood with her forward-thinking approach.

**UNION
STREET
STUDIO, LLC**

PRACTICE
WORK
Buildings
West Park Church
Tuckahoe
Ars Nova
7 Essex Street
WVVO Adds Ababa
Union Street Studio
Cosmopolitan Hotel
Shivers Row
Temple Israel
Preservation
Adaptive Reuse
Interiors
Conceptual
Furniture
CONTACT



This congregation on the upper west side of Manhattan teamed with a developer to transform their property into a new worship space and a condominium tower. A second development team pursued a strategy of retaining and transforming the existing sanctuary building while retaining the idea of a new apartment building over the existing chapter house.
Rendering by: Jon Seagull

Then there is the once, and now recurrent, NY City Councilmember Gale Brewer and her oft-repeated promise that she alone would raise \$20Million to help restore the church building, made to anyone with a pen and notebook, a radio or TV News crew and restated when West-Park's case was heard by the City Council.

Even more galling during that Council session, carried live and in living color on its live cablecast, one councilmember had the nerve to throw verbal flowers at the congregation then, in the next breath add "but," and proceed to state that he was *laying aside* his ethics and principles to vote to force landmark status on the building. As we later learned, the rubberstamping of a landmarking request is a public-be-damned SOP: if that district's council member has no problems with the landmarking effort, it is approved.

By the way, about a month or so later, that particular councilmember was busted for campaign fraud and finance irregularities.

Exactly: so much for ethics and principles.

I'm sure it's obvious now that choking the West-Park congregation further by preventing them from erecting something that will keep their ministry alive and better-serve the neighborhood for the balance of the 21st Century.

Years ago, if I ever wondered that, if the West-Park Church building housed a synagogue or a catholic or episcopal church or a mosque would the neighborhood's pursuit of feeding their edifice complex to the total disregard of and for the human worshippers inside been as ruthless.

As a Christian, I hated to think so.

As a New Yorker, I have to admit: the possibility exists.

Respectfully,

/s/

Jim Nedelka

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New York NY 10034-3021

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+1 (917) 617-5785

Broadway Presbyterian Church

601 W. 114th Street, New York, NY 10025

www.bpcnyc.org ♦ 212.864.6100

Rev. Chris Shelton, *pastor*



Dear Neighbors on Community Board 7:

The people of the West Park Presbyterian Church need your support.

I served as a Pastoral Intern at the West Park Presbyterian Church, beginning on September 10, 2001. The day after, our City was shaken to its core. As an aspiring young pastor, I got to see the power of a small community at work. Together, we held vigil for the lives that had been lost. Together, several of us worked at Ground Zero, preparing food for the tireless workers who combed through the still smoldering rubble of that dreadful day. In the year that followed, we spoke out against the march to war. We created space for art that spoke to the times. We sang our hopes and our pains.

In those days, we were buoyed up at the thought of what could be. A development proposal was under consideration, and it sparked great hope in our community. I went on to graduate from Seminary, and watched from a distance as the landmarking process challenged and stretched and wounded the West Park community. It is hard to lose hope-filled plans and dreams.

The subsequent years have challenged the West Park community all the more. Small communities can rise up mightily to speak out on injustice; but it is hard for small communities to rally funders to pay for bricks and mortar. Promises of support came and went.

Today, your neighbors at West Park are asking you to join them in preserving their legacy. They have grappled for years with two competing challenges: the maintenance of a historic building and the heritage of a historic community. They are asking for your support in preserving that which is most important: the community. By lifting the burden of landmarking, and opening the door to development of the congregation's property, you will free this community to dream and hope again. You will invigorate their hearts for ministry and service again.

And through this change, look what might become possible: a new home for emerging artists on the UWS, a reinvigorated community of justice-seekers, and even beyond that corner alone: life-giving support for food pantries, soup kitchens and other community outreach programs in the City's most challenged neighborhoods.

Preservation is important. Let us preserve the mission of this community first – not the walls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chris Shelton'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rev. Chris Shelton

Pastor

Ms. Sarah Carroll, Chair
The Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Center Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: West-Park Presbyterian Church
165 West 86th Street, Manhattan
LPC #-22-09135

Dear Chair Carroll:

As leaders of faith from across New York City, we share a mission in service to our congregations and neighbors in every borough. We are a mosaic of denominations and beliefs with a common goal to ensure the safety and prosperity of every New Yorker in both body and spirit.

The congregation of West-Park Presbyterian Church has been an essential part of that mosaic for nearly 160 years. Today, West-Park is asking for the opportunity to continue to be a resource for New Yorkers. We ask that the Landmark Preservation Commission grant the congregation's hardship application so that West-Park can reaffirm its commitment to its members and community.

The last two years have been a test for many New Yorkers. Our faith-based organizations and institutions worked tirelessly to do their good works at a time of great need. They did so even as many of our City's longtime houses of worship are besieged by countless ongoing challenges. Attendance at religious services continues to decline nationwide, a reality worsened by the pandemic. Unsurprisingly, it has also accelerated financial pressure on many religious communities.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that our religious institutions — including West-Park Presbyterian Church — be afforded the flexibility to creatively and thoughtfully pursue opportunities to ensure their congregations can continue their mission-oriented work in service of New Yorkers. We must allow them the grace and means to adapt to the challenges before them and leverage the resources available to persevere and thrive.

We recognize the importance of preserving our City's historical and architectural fabric, especially our sacred spaces that represent so much to community members. Nonetheless, the landmarking of the West-Park building ten years ago resulted in a significant economic burden for a congregation that has shrunk in size and resources as it struggles to keep up with necessary repairs.

We urge the Commission to grant the West-Park congregation the opportunity to secure the resources it needs to grow and flourish. New York City risks losing a historic religious institution deeply rooted in its community without it. The congregation's plan ensures it can fulfill its

mission for generations to come and will also result in a significant gift that the Presbytery of New York can use to support more congregations across the City working to improve the lives of their fellow New Yorkers through service.

Hardship applications are rare and understandably so. The Landmarks Law provision is particular in what it requires of applicants, and we firmly believe West-Park would be an appropriate grantee.

Sincerely, the undersigned

Rev. Matthew Dimick, Hassenfeld Children's Hospital, NYU Langone

Rev. Dr. Mark Hostetter, First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York

Associate Pastor Beverly Bartlett, Madison Ave Presbyterian Church

Rev. Thomas Lawrence

Rev. Victoria Moss, Ridgewood Presbyterian Church

Rev. Bertram Johnson

Rev. Dr. Katharine Henderson, First Presbyterian Church/Auburn Seminary

Beverly Dempsey, Chair of the Board, Urban Outreach Center of NYC

Pastor Liz Theoharis, Director, Kairos Center and Freedom Church of the Poor

Rev. Anne Conroy, Presbytery of New York City

Pastor Brad Crump, First United Presbyterian Church

Mark Koenig, Internal Communication Specialist, U.S. Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. Perry Wooten, Eastchester Presbyterian Church

Rev. Clive Neil, Bedford Central

Rev. Carmen Rosario, Presbytery of New York City

Pastor Luis E. Espinosa-Batista, Fort George Presbyterian Church

Pastor Chris Shelton, Broadway Presbyterian Church

Rev. Jeffrey Courter, First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills, NY

Lynn Wishart, Ruling Elder Commissioner to the Presbytery of NYC, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church

Rev. Brenda Berry, Pastor Emeritus, University Heights Presbyterian Church

Minister Patrick Vaughn, Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church

Rev. Adriene Thorne, First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn

Rev. Jose Gonzalez-Colon, First Presbyterian Church of Newtown

Rev. David Peters, Calvary Presbyterian Church

Pastor Yaw Frimpong-Manso, Emmanuel Presbyterian Reformed Church

Pastor Daniel Damiani, Good Neighbor Presbyterian Church

Carroll Arkema, Pastoral Psychotherapist, Pastor-At-Large, Presbytery of New York City

Rev. Phil Tom, Riverside Church

Rev. Dr. Miriam Shelton, Presbytery of New York City

Interim Pastor Eric Thomas, Siloam Presbyterian Church

Rev. Emily Brewer, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Pastor Samuel David Brettell, Glen Morris Presbyterian Church

Pastor David Aja-Sigmon, Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn

Rev. Dr. Robert Foltz-Morrison, Presbytery of New York City
Russ Jennings, Ruling Elder, West Park Presbyterian Church
Rev. Clark Bradley, Fourth Presbyterian Church
Rev. Samson Tso, Homecrest Presbyterian Church
Pastor Diane Lacey, The Church of Gethsemane
Dion Thompson, Elder, West Park Presbyterian Church
Rev. Kellie Picallo
Rev. Althelia Pond, Mount Morris Ascension Presyterian Church
Rev. Jordan Tarwater, Executive Director, Urban Outreach Center/Avenue Church NYC
Chaplain (Rev.) Maria Felix, Member at Large
Rev. Edgardo Gonzalez
Rev. Thomas Evans, Brick Presbyterian Church
Rev. Andrew Stehlik, Th.D., Rutgers Presbyterian Church
Rev. Beverly Bartlett, Madison Ave Presbyterian Church
Rev. Victoria Moss, Ridgewood Presbyterian Church
Lloyd Johnson, Ruling Elder, Eastchester Presbyterian Church
Rev. Dr. Flora Wilson Bridges, Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church
Rev. Perry Wootten
Jane Donnelly, Retired Member of NYC Presbytery, Fourth Ave Presbyterian Church
Pastor Youngmin Lo, Hope Church of New York
Pastor Daniel Rivera, Teaching Elder, First Spanish Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn
Gladys Ortiz, Clerk of Session, El Buen Pastor Presbyterian Church