



---

**IN THE MATTER OF** a communication dated June 8, 2018, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup>-132<sup>nd</sup> Street Historic District, designated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on May 29, 2018 (Designation List No. 507/LP-2607), which consists of the properties bounded by a line beginning on the southern curblineline of West 130th Street at a point on a line extending northerly from the eastern property line of 102 West 130th Street, then extending southerly along the eastern property line of 102 West 130th, westerly along the southern property lines of 102 West 130th Street to 170 West 130th Street, then northerly along the western property line of 170 West 130th Street to the southern curblineline of West 130th Street, then easterly along the southern curblineline of West 130th Street to a point on a line extending southerly from the western property line of 147 West 130th Street, then northerly along the western property line of 147 West 130th Street, then westerly along the southern property lines of 148 West 131st Street to 156 West 131st Street, then northerly along the western property line of 156 West 131st Street to the southern curblineline of West 131st Street, then easterly along the southern curblineline of West 131st Street to a point on a line extending southerly from the western property line of 161-163 West 131st Street, then northerly along the western property line of 161-163 West 131st Street and along the western property line of 166 West 132nd Street to the northern curblineline of West 132nd Street, then westerly along the northern curblineline of West 132nd Street to a point on a line extending southerly from the western property line of 161 West 132nd Street, then northerly along the western property line of 161 West 132nd Street, then easterly along the northern property lines of 161 West 132nd Street to 103 West 132nd Street, then southerly along the eastern property line of 103 West 132nd Street, extending southerly across West 132nd Street and southerly along the eastern property lines of 102 West 132nd Street and 103 West 131st Street to the northern curblineline of West 131st Street, then westerly along the northern curblineline of West 131st Street to a point on a line extending northerly from the eastern property line of 104 West 131st Street, then southerly along the eastern property line of 104 West 131st Street, then easterly along the northern property line of 103 West 130th Street, then southerly along the eastern property line of 103 West 130th Street to the southern curblineline of West 130th Street, then easterly to the point of beginning, Borough of Manhattan, Community District 10.

---

Pursuant to Section 3020.8(b) of the City Charter, the City Planning Commission shall submit to the City Council a report with respect to the relation of any designation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, whether of a historic district or a landmark, to the Zoning Resolution, projected public improvements, and any plans for the development, growth, improvement or renewal of the area involved.

On May 29, 2018, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> – 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets Historic District as a New York City Historic District. The landmark designation consists of 164 buildings within an area consisting generally of the midblocks of West

130<sup>th</sup> Street, West 131<sup>st</sup> Street, and West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street, between Lenox Avenue/Malcolm X. Boulevard to the east and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard to the west, within Manhattan Community District 10.

The Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> – 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets Historic District consists of residential, institutional, and commercial buildings that collectively reflect the rich heritage of Harlem. The district's built character is the product of a speculative building boom that rapidly transformed Harlem in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following the construction of transit lines linking the neighborhood to the rest of Manhattan, Harlem's country estates gave way to rows of new homes built for New Yorkers looking to escape the overcrowding of Lower Manhattan. In less than two decades, architects like Cleverdon & Putzel, Charles Baxter, and William J. Merritt built row houses with standardized designs and materials, filling the once-empty blocks with single-family homes sold to families of Dutch, German, and English heritage. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the neighborhood had fully transformed from a pastoral hinterland into a dense residential enclave for the white middle and upper-middle class.

At the time of the district's development, the neo-Grec was the most popular style for row houses in New York City. The neo-Grec style continued to be commonly used for row house design through the 1880s, when it was supplanted by eclectic preferences for the Queen Anne and the Romanesque Revival styles, and later the highly ordered classical aesthetic of the Renaissance Revival. As a result, the vast majority of the district's buildings are representative of the neo-Grec (115), with a handful of Queen Anne (17), Renaissance Revival (19), and Romanesque Revival (2) buildings.

By the turn of the century, Harlem began to attract middle-class African-American families moving north to escape the conditions of New York's Tenderloin District, which historically was one of the few areas open to black families. The Central Harlem – West 130<sup>th</sup>-132<sup>nd</sup> Streets Historic District remained almost exclusively white through the 1910s, but by the 1920s the neighborhood was primarily a middle-class African-American neighborhood. The concentration of academics, clergy, doctors, activists, artists, actors, and musicians created the conditions that

made this area home to an impressive variety of cultural, religious, civic, and political activity. Professional and social organizations such as the New Amsterdam Musical Association, the oldest African-American musical association in the United States, and the Alpha Physical Culture Club, the first all-black athletic club in the United States, sought to meet the needs of a community that was kept out of the equivalent “white-only” groups of Manhattan.

As a microcosm of the African-American experience in greater Harlem, the district is significant not only for its contributions to the social and political history of the immediate area, but to the nation as a whole. Particularly notable is the district’s role as the location of the planning headquarters for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, which remains the nation’s largest political demonstration and was instrumental in spurring the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Today, the Central Harlem – West 130th-132nd Streets Historic District is not only a significant enclave of residential architecture representative of Central Harlem’s first major phase of development, but a remarkable reminder of the substantial role that the African-American community of Harlem played in creating political and social change in New York City and the nation.

The proposed district is primarily residential, with a handful of institutional or commercial buildings. The district is mapped with an R7-2 zoning district, a height-factor district mapped over large parts of Harlem. R7-2 districts allow a maximum residential floor area ratio (FAR) of 3.44 and a maximum community facility FAR of 6.5. Portions of the proposed district within 100 feet of Lenox Avenue are mapped with C2-4 overlays and portions within 100 feet of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard are mapped with C1-4 overlays. C2-4 and C1-4 commercial overlays allow a maximum commercial FAR of 2.0. Both commercial overlays allow retail and personal service establishments that serve local shopping needs, while C2-4 overlays allow a slightly wider range of uses.

The surrounding area is primarily residential as well. The majority of the surrounding area is also zoned R7-2, with some pockets of R8 or R8A districts, including an R8A district immediately

adjacent along Lenox Avenue. This R8A district was rezoned in 2017 (C 170051 HAM) to facilitate the eventual construction of a 10-story mixed-use building known as The Robeson. Midblocks in the surrounding area are generally lined with two- to four-story brownstones, with some taller five- to seven-story residential buildings. A particularly striking example of this midblock condition is Astor Row, 26 historic landmark row houses located one block to the east of the proposed district. Avenues in the surrounding area generally feature taller five- to seven-story residential buildings with ground-floor retail. Two large midcentury residential complexes, Lenox Terrace and the St. Nicholas Houses, are located nearby. These two “tower-in-the-park” style developments are notable exceptions to the prevailing built form. A number of prominent churches are also located in the area, including two designated historic landmarks: St. Phillips Episcopal Church and St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church.

On April 17, 2018, the LPC held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Central Harlem – West 130th St-132nd Streets Historic District (Public Hearing Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Twenty-four speakers testified in favor of the designation as proposed, including representatives of the office of a New York State Senator, the office of the Manhattan Borough President, Manhattan Community Board 10, the New York City Landmarks Conservancy, the Real Estate Board of New York, Historic Districts Council, The Municipal Art Society of New York, Society for the Architecture of the City, LANDMARK WEST!, Save Harlem Now!, Ascendant Neighborhood Development, the West 131st Street Block Association, the 132nd Street Block Association, Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association, New Amsterdam Musical Association, local property owners, and local residents. Two of those in support of the district and one other speaker raised concerns about the inclusion of specific properties. One person spoke in opposition.

The LPC also received a letter in support of the district from a New York State Assemblywoman who noted concerns about the inclusion of certain properties; a letter from the owner of 161-165 West 132nd Street, opposing the inclusion of this property in the district; and a petition with 454

signatures supporting the inclusion of 161-165 West 132nd Street in the district.

On May 29, 2018 the LPC voted unanimously to designate the area as a Historic District.

All landmark buildings within the Historic District are eligible to apply for use and bulk waivers pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution.

### **CITY PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING**

Pursuant to Section 3020.8(a) of the City Charter, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed district on July 11, 2018 (Calendar No. 35). There were no speakers and the hearing was closed.

### **CONSIDERATION**

The City Planning Commission has evaluated the Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> – 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets Historic District in relation to the Zoning Resolution, projected public improvements and plans for the development, growth and improvements in the vicinity of the area involved. The City Planning Commission believes that the designation of the Central Harlem West 130<sup>th</sup> – 132<sup>nd</sup> Streets Historic District is consistent with plans for the area's future development and improvement. The Commission is not aware of any conflicts between the subject Historic District designation and projected public improvements or any plans for development, growth, improvement, or renewal in the vicinity of the Historic District.

**MARISA LAGO**, *Chair*

**KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, ESQ.**, *Vice Chairman*

**ALLEN CAPPELLI, ALFRED C. CERULLO, III, MICHELLE R. DE LA UZ,**

**JOSEPH I. DOUEK, RICHARD W. EADDY, CHERYL COHEN EFFRON, HOPE KNIGHT,**

**ANNA HAYES LEVIN, ORLANDO MARIN, LARISA ORTIZ** *Commissioners*