

The Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council

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May 8, 2008

The Honorable Robert Tierney
Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chairman Tierney,

On behalf of the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council, I would like to express our appreciation for the Commission's action with respect to our request to evaluate an area of Prospect Heights for designation as a historic district. We are also grateful to Kate Daly, Mary Beth Betts and Sarah Carroll for the presentation which they made to our community on April 9. We have since presented Ms. Betts with over 400 cards we've received from neighbors in support of designation, and over 200 signed letters of support. These are in addition to the over 200 letters we have previously sent to your attention. The letters and cards reflect the concern among Prospect Heights residents that the historic character of our neighborhood is threatened by over development, and we are glad to see that the Commission shares our concern.

PHNDNC has reviewed the study area boundaries which were presented at the April 9 meeting, and we are excited that the Commission is considering such a large area for evaluation. We would like to ask that the Commission also consider making four additions to the study area.

- The building at the northeast corner of Sterling Place and Flatbush Avenue is a National Register landmark. Further, the rowhouses and apartment building east of the corner on the north side of Sterling are excellent examples of 19th century residential dwellings in fine condition. We believe the exclusion of these buildings from the study area may have been unintentional, and hope they can be added.
- Vanderbilt Avenue is the main street of Prospect Heights, and we are delighted that the Commission has planned a study area that includes many of the avenue's low-rise mixed-use buildings. We would like to ask that the study area boundary on Vanderbilt Avenue be extended north to Dean Street on the western side of the avenue, and to Pacific Street on the eastern side. The buildings on these blocks are of the same era and use as the buildings on the blocks included in the study area. They also share the same R7A zoning, which makes them particularly vulnerable to uncharacteristic alterations which maximize use of available FAR, and in fact, one of the buildings on the western side of Vanderbilt at the corner of Dean Street has already experienced such an alteration.
- Since the time we submitted our RFE to the Commission, we have received requests from community members that the western side of the block of Underhill Avenue between Sterling Place and St. Johns Place be included in a Prospect Heights historic district. This block contains low-scale mixed use residential and commercial buildings which are little changed from their early 20th century original construction. PHNDNC agrees that these buildings are a unique architectural feature of the neighborhood, and hope the Commission will consider adding them to the study area.
- Finally, the residents of Dean Street between Carlton Avenue and Vanderbilt Avenue have noted that the five tory apartment buildings, (548 to 560 Dean), which line the southern side of Dean Street extending from Carlton Avenue are back-to-back with the analagous apartment buildings on Bergen Street currently included in the study area. They point out that Dean Street buildings are still rich in original details from the time they were built in 1904 and merit protection. There are photos of the Bergen and Dean Street buildings included with this letter for reference.

Thank you very much for the interest which you and your staff have shown for historic designation for Prospect Heights. We look forward to working with the Commission in every way possible to ensure our community continues to be effectively engaged during the designation process.

Sincerely,

Gib Veconi
Chairman

cc: Mayor Michael Bloomberg
Borough President Marty Markowitz
Councilmember Letitia James
Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries
Assemblywoman Joan Millman
State Senator Velmanette Montgomery
State Senator Eric Adams
Mr. Robert Mathews, Chairman, CB8
Ms. Doris Alexander, District 8 Manager



531-549 Bergen, looking west



548-560 Dean Street