From the President

Dear Friend of the Conservancy:

“We don’t do planning. We do preservation.” That’s what a former Conservancy Chairman used to say. But, this year, as major planning proposals threatened to undercut protections of historic buildings, the dividing line dissolved. The Conservancy trustees decided that, whenever planning impacts preservation, we need to be involved. And we were.

Mayor de Blasio’s citywide upzoning proposals could have had a serious impact on historic buildings and districts. Some elements of the real estate industry continued to claim that historic districts restrict growth. So, we joined the successful fight to modify the upzoning proposals during the City Council’s review. We helped stop a de Blasio administration bill in Albany that would have allowed giant towers in neighborhoods throughout the City. And we commissioned the first-ever study of preservation’s benefits to New York.

The report noted historic districts cover only 5% of the City. They are the densest areas in each borough, and economically and racially diverse. Historic districts are also a magnet for the creative industries. So much for the claim that historic districts freeze the City.

As plans for Midtown East continued, we were at the table and helped push the City Landmarks Commission to designate worthy buildings in that area. There were twelve new landmarks—including the Yale Club and Graybar Building—by year’s end.

We also lobbied the Landmarks Commission on other matters. Working with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and colleagues, we convinced the LPC to have hearings and votes on a long list of “backlog” buildings that had lingered for years without a final determination. We succeeded in getting designation for Kevin Roche’s Ramboyant 1976 Ambassador Grill in the United Nations Hotel. Following notice that The Waldorf-Astoria would be gutted by new owners, we led a public lobbying campaign that saw the magnificent public rooms calendared by November.

When a controversial City Council bill proposed deadlines for the Landmarks Commission, we surveyed colleagues in other cities and found that many landmark agencies have deadlines. So we worked with the bill’s sponsors and eliminated sections of the bill we found harmful.

While public policy issues dominated the headlines, our loan and grant programs hit the $50 million mark, assisting landmark property owners across the City and State. Our Historic Properties Fund closed its 250th loan. We celebrated the 30th anniversary of Sacred Sites. And our emergency grants helped repairs at the Brooklyn Historical Society, Gould Memorial Library at the Bronx Community College, and The Academy of Arts and Letters in Upper Manhattan.

Another chock-full year made possible by an experienced professional staff, engaged board members and dedicated supporters like you. We are very grateful.

Peg Breen, President
Speaking Out for Preservation

“Of course New York needs to continue to grow, but it doesn’t make sense to add density to what are already the densest areas when so much of the City is not under landmarks regulation.”

- Donovan Rypkema, Principal, PlaceEconomics

PUBLIC POLICY - Preservation is an economic engine that creates jobs, attracts industry, welcomes tourists, and safeguards affordable housing. These were the findings of “Historic Preservation: At the Core of a Dynamic New York City,” the Conservancy’s ground-breaking study, published in 2016. As we presented the quantified evidence of preservation’s impacts, we faced the potential for widespread changes to zoning that would alter historic neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs. The report’s conclusions bolstered our advocacy work, supporting landmark designations and examining effects of the City’s planning and zoning initiatives.

Economic Impact Study on Historic Preservation

The Conservancy commissioned Donovan Rypkema, the Washington, DC–based economist, and his firm, PlaceEconomics, to create this first-of-its-kind report which considers how preservation has affected New York City’s economy. For decades, there was little hard evidence of this activity and professionals were forced to use anecdotes and individual experiences to capture the ways in which preservation and landmark designation have left their mark on our City’s neighborhoods. In an increasingly hostile landscape, where economists, elected officials, and members of the real estate industry blamed preservation for stifling job growth, diminishing affordable housing, and exacerbating racism and inequality, the Conservancy responded with facts and numbers that present a very different picture.

Key findings:

- More than $800 million is invested annually in New York’s historic buildings, creating jobs for 9,000 New Yorkers and providing paychecks of over $350 million each year.
- The creative industries are a rapidly growing and vital component of New York’s economy, and jobs in those industries are disproportionately found in historic districts.
- Heritage tourism is a major component of New York’s visitor industry. Just the domestic portion of that visitor segment provides jobs for 130,000 New Yorkers.
- Historic districts are the densest residential neighborhoods in every borough of New York City, usually having a density of two to three times that of the borough overall.
- Both historic office and apartment buildings use significantly less energy per square foot than their more recently built competitors.
- Historic districts overall are diverse economically and demographically.

The report cites a New York Building Congress study that 2015 was a record year for construction activity in the City, producing 16,850 units of housing, the highest number of units in recent years. While the current mayoral administration insists that New York needs to add density to address a housing shortage, our report states that “scapegoating neighborhoods that are already the densest in the City is both foolish and bad public policy.”

These conclusions were featured in three public panels. In May, Rypkema presented his findings alongside authors of two other reports. The Historic District Council’s The Intersection of Affordable Housing and Historic Districts rebutted claims that landmarking is detrimental to affordable housing. The New York Times reported that New York is the densest city in the nation, where “preservation and growth as New York plans for up to a million new residents and seeks to maintain its status as a world class city? The answer was a resounding yes.”

Fifty Years of Preservation in New York City

In July, Rypkema continued the conversation, delivering a powerful defense of preservation and historic districts in a lively discussion with economist Ed Glaeser at the New York Times conference “Cities for Tomorrow.” Glaeser is a proponent of the theory that historic districts limit new building and therefore limit affordable housing. Rypkema countered that argument by noting that historic districts in New York account for less than 5% of land and lots across the five boroughs, leaving ample room for new development, and that characterizing historic districts as the villain in the struggle to create affordable housing is wrong.

The Intersection of Affordable Housing and Historic Districts

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Midtown East: Finding Room for Landmarks and Development

The Conservancy continued to highlight the significant role of Midtown East’s landmarks in keeping this business district vital and compelling, as the City developed a proposal to dramatically upzone the area. By year’s end, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) had designated 12 new individual landmarks and the Department of City Planning (DCP) was set to release specifics on how Midtown East’s landmarks would have a greater ability to transfer their unutilized development rights. These are measures that the Conservancy has advocated for since the Bloomberg administration’s 2013 proposal, which ignored Midtown East’s extraordinary historic architecture.

The Conservancy testified in support of the 12 new landmarks at a series of LPC hearings. The agency designated all 12 in December. We lauded steps to recognize these buildings, but are still concerned about many significant properties that DCP labeled as “projected” or “potential” development sites in the rezoning proposal. In 2013, when the Bloomberg administration put forward its Midtown East rezoning proposal, the Conservancy, along with the Historic Districts Council and Municipal Art Society, issued a priority list for landmarks.

The LPC designated eight from that list, and we continue to request designation of the remaining eight. They include:

- Vanderbilt Concourse Building, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue
- Roosevelt Hotel, 45 East 45th Street
- Lincoln Building, 69 East 42nd Street
- Postum Building, 250 Park Avenue
- Hotel Intercontinental, 111 East 48th Street
- Chemists Club, 50-52 East 41st Street
- Girl Scouts of America, 830 Third Avenue
- Union Carbide Building, 270 Park Avenue

The Commission has given no indication that they will designate any more buildings. The Hotel Intercontinental and Postum Building are on “projected” development sites, and 52 Vanderbilt and the Roosevelt Hotel were included in the Vanderbilt Corridor upzoning, leaving them vulnerable to development pressure.

The Midtown East rezoning will increase an existing financial incentive for landmarks by expanding sites where they can transfer development rights to the entire rezoning area (39th to 57th Street, from Madison to Third Avenues,) but it will require an assessment of either 20% or $78 per rights to the entire rezoning area (39th to 57th Street, from Madison to 52 Vanderbilt and the Roosevelt Hotel were included in the Vanderbilt Corridor upzoning, leaving them vulnerable to development pressure. The Commission has given no indication that they will designate any more buildings. The Hotel Intercontinental and Postum Building are on “projected” development sites, and 52 Vanderbilt and the Roosevelt Hotel were included in the Vanderbilt Corridor upzoning, leaving them vulnerable to development pressure. The Commission has given no indication that they will designate any more buildings. The Hotel Intercontinental and Postum Building are on “projected” development sites, and 52 Vanderbilt and the Roosevelt Hotel were included in the Vanderbilt Corridor upzoning, leaving them vulnerable to development pressure.

The 1915-16 Hampton Shops Building (18-20 East 50th Street) is a fine example of structures built as Grand Central Terminal was influencing changes in Midtown East, and commercial development was oversupplying smaller residential buildings. The 11-story neo-Gothic office building’s gray terra-cotta façade features delicate decorative ornament, with tracery and heraldic romans.

At 400 Madison Avenue, H. Craig Severance designed a masterful neo-Gothic commercial building. The 20-story tower, which dates to 1929, features white terra-cotta crenelations, decorated with picturesque crenelations, with tracery and heraldic romans.

James Gamble Rogers designed the stately Yale Club (50 Vanderbilt Avenue) in the Renaissance Revival style, with classical massing, a rusticated limestone base, bas-relief figures symbolizing electricity and transportation frame the entrances. They are juxtaposed with some of the most delightful (or ironic) decorative elements on any Manhattan office building: metal rats climbing up ropes over the southern-most entrance.

The Yale Club is one of the last remnants of Terminal City, the series of structures built to complement Grand Central Terminal. Upon completion in 1923, it was the world’s tallest hotel when it was finished in 1923. Complementing a dynamic, and graceful silhouette is exquisite limestone ornament, such as Byzantine-inspired capitals, Venetian gothic windows with balconies, and grotesque gargoyles.

Midtown East Landmarks

The 1923 Pershing Square Building (125 Park Avenue) is among the most beautiful in Midtown. It represents the era when the construction of Grand Central and new transportation infrastructure catalyzed commercial development. The Romanesque Revival tower features round-arched windows tilted hipped roofs and polychrome terra cotta, with extensive geometric decorations and a series of stem angels staring down from the frieze.

The Graybar Building (420 Lexington Avenue) is one of the last remnants of Terminal City, the series of structures built to complement Grand Central Terminal. Upon completion in 1927, it was one of the world’s largest office buildings. At the limestone base, bas-relief figures symbolizing electricity and transportation frame the entrances. They are juxtaposed with some of the most delightful (or ironic) decorative elements on any Manhattan office building: metal rats climbing up ropes over the southern-most entrance.

The Hotel Lexington (511 Lexington Avenue) was built in 1929-30, designed by Schultze and Weaver, with an inventive synthesis of animal and geometric motifs. Eagles, gargoyles, angels, and foliate carving enliven the facades of this tapering, stepped building.

Emery Roth and Sylvan Bien designed the Beverly Hotel (now known as the Benjamin, 125 East 50th Street) in 1927. The limestone base has Romanesque revival arches, corbel tables and fanciful keystones containing owls and pelicans. A series of setbacks rise towards the dramatic tower’s rose windows, pilasters and Art-Deco festinations.

The 1,200-room, 34-story Shelton Hotel (525 Lexington Avenue) was the world’s tallest hotel when it was finished in 1923. Complementing a dynamic, and graceful silhouette is exquisite limestone ornament, such as Byzantine-inspired capitals, Venetian gothic windows with balconies, and grotesque gargoyles.

Not designated - Hotel Intercontinental, 111 East 48th Street

18 East 41st Street, a 21-story “upscale” office building, was advertised as having modern amenities such as “four high speed elevators” and “light on four sides.” Its handsome Gothic-revival exterior features splendid terra cotta ornamentation. It is typical of fashionable high rises erected contemporaneously with Grand Central Terminal, prior to the 1916 zoning ordinance.

Once known as the Citicorp Center (501 Lexington Avenue,) the former First National City Bank commissioned this urban complex to serve as their headquarters in the early 1970’s. Upon completion in 1977, it was New York’s only major new office tower that year. The complex also included St. Peter’s Church, a low-rise structure integrated into the site at an angle that sets off its bold angles and provides a dramatic contrast to both the orthogonal plan of the city streets and the height of the tower above.
The links between preservation, planning, and zoning informed several issues that the Conservancy addressed in 2016.

**Zoning for Quality (ZQA) and Affordability Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH)**

The Conservancy opposed these two City-wide upzonings at a packed City Council hearing. The bills were presented as spurring affordable housing, but they were severely flawed, with provisions to allow massive amounts of market-rate residential development and threaten hard-won limits on growth found in contextual-zoned areas. When the Administration announced these proposals, it expected them to pass them in a matter of months. But the public expressed strong opposition and an opportunity to speak. Most Community Boards opposed both plans, as did the Borough Boards. All five of the Borough presidents opposed ZQA and all but Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer opposed MIH. The City Council approved the bills in March, with significant improvements in response to the overwhelming critique. In the final version of ZQA:

- The Silver Law remained in effect, ensuring that tall, skinny mid-block buildings will continue to be banned.
- The five-foot height increase for market-rate developments was eliminated in the “Manhattan core” (south of 110th St on the West Side and 96th St on the East Side).
- Back yard open space was protected, with a limited exception for affordable senior housing.
- A height bonus for affordable housing was reduced by 10 feet in many areas.
- Height differences for buildings on wide versus narrow streets remained in place.
- Parking had greater protection in areas where public transportation is limited.

Despite these improvements, ZQA will leave contextual districts in upper Manhattan and the other boroughs vulnerable to new, larger, taller buildings that will compromise their character. MIH initially set affordability levels so high that many residents of facing zoning would be priced out. The Council promised greater and deeper affordability, with protections against displacement. These are certainly improvements, but bigger issues remain. MIH will still require tremendous market-rate development to subsidize affordable units. In practical terms, with this expanded definition, the MTA could develop properties such as its headquarters building at 347 Madison, the Sunnyside Yards, or numerous Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road sites, bypassing local land use regulations. The NY Conference of Mayors, de Blasio Administration, and the NYC DOI all agreed that the MTA should not have this leeway. Unfortunately the Governor vetoed the changes, claiming that the change in the budget language “supports the MTA efforts to maximize the incidental revenues it receives from its assets.” The bills’ sponsors are no longer in office, but we will work to have the legislation reintroduced in the current session.

**MTA/Zoning Exemptions**

The Conservancy issued a Memo of Support for legislation to stop a plan that exempts the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) from local zoning laws. We worked with Senator Krueger and preservation colleagues, urging Governor Cuomo to sign legislation passed in the State Senate and Assembly to nullify provisions in the State budget that expanded the definition of MTA “transportation purposes” and allowed the Authority to undertake or facilitate development on its property without regard to local zoning laws. In practical terms, with this expanded definition, the MTA could develop properties such as its headquarters building at 347 Madison, the Sunnyside Yards, or numerous Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road sites, bypassing local land use regulations. The NY Conference of Mayors, de Blasio Administration, and the NYC DOI all agreed that the MTA should not have this leeway. Unfortunately the Governor vetoed the changes, claiming that the change in the budget language “supports the MTA efforts to maximize the incidental revenues it receives from its assets.” The bills’ sponsors are no longer in office, but we will work to have the legislation reintroduced in the current session.

**New York State Senate Bill 5499/Assembly Bill 7807**

The Conservancy sent a Memo of Opposition to these bills which would have allowed mega-towers throughout the City. Following a last minute alert from State Senator Liu Krueger, the Conservancy and colleagues groups mounted a public lobbying effort that stopped the bills, which turned up in the last days of the State legislative session. The de Blasio Administration initiated the bills to amend New York State’s Multiple Dwelling Law, which currently caps the floor area ratio of all buildings in any municipality of the State at 12.0, to eliminate its applicability in New York City, without any public notice. The Memos stated that there was no study or explanation of the rationale for the bill. The City had recently passed ZQA and MIH, two city-wide upzoning measures, so there was no need to rush this bill through the legislature; and, there was no analysis of environmental impacts on high-density neighborhoods. It is expected that the bill will return this year. We will continue working with Senator Krueger’s office to monitor it, and will speak out against the bill when it does return.

**Proposals for Alternations to Landmarks**

Throughout 2016, proposals for alterations to individual landmarks and new construction within historic districts came before the Conservancy’s Public Policy Committee and staff, who reviewed these plans, leading to statements at public agencies. These statements reflect the Conservancy’s position that there is room for preservation and growth across the City.

The Public Policy Committee received several briefings on proposals to alter the America Museum of Natural History. At an LPC hearing, we supported the overall project, with concerns regarding the appropriateness of this contemporary façade at a historic site, and asked the architect to consider making a stronger visual connection to the existing landmark buildings. We were glad to see that the new building will be set back into the Museum complex, allowing part of Roosevelt Park to remain open and minimizing tree loss. The LPC approved the application.

The Conservancy supported a proposal to alter the Ford Foundation’s landmarked interior. The proposal focused on modifications to increase barrier-free access to the landscaped atrium and improve fire-safety throughout the building. The Ford Foundation building is an interior and exterior landmark which features an extraordinary landscaped garden in an atrium that rises up 12 stories. The Conservancy supported the application.

The Conservancy testified on a proposal to dismantle and reconstruct the Tin Building at the South Street Seaport. The final results should salvage historic components, and recalc facades with metal siding, to reproduce the Tin Building’s observer that rises up 12 stories. The Conservancy approved the application.

The Conservancy opposed a proposal to demolish the Tin Building at the South Street Seaport. The final results should salvage historic components, and recalc facades with metal siding, to reproduce the Tin Building’s observer that rises up 12 stories. The Conservancy approved the application.

As usual, the Conservancy received several briefings on a proposed alteration to the American Museum of Natural History. The Conservancy does not typically endorse reconstruction projects, but made an exception because this work, which raises the building, should help the building survive the next major flood and allow it to edge out of the shadow of the FDR Drive, becoming more visible to the public. We supported the proposal with the proviso that more of the historic interior columns are reused. The Commission voted to approve the proposal.

The Conservancy joined advocates and elected officials opposing an application to modify additions to the Hopper-Gibbons House, on West 29th Street in the Lamartine Place Historic District. The owner had started construction of a rooftop addition several years ago, prior to the District’s designation, with a permit that the Department of Buildings later found invalid, the Board of Standards and Appeals denied the owner’s request to reverse DOB’s decision, and the New York State Appellate Court denied the owner’s petition to annul the ESA ruling. The owner went to LPC to apply to modify the illegal addition. We asked the LPC to exercise its full power and require removal of the addition, as the original height and volume of the building is far below the house’s significance and association with the Underground Railroad. The family of the early owners, James and Abby Hopper Gibbons, prominent abolitionists, crossed the roof and neighboring houses to escape the 1863 Draft Riots. That history is manifest in this group of row houses and their original, continuous roofline. The LPC rejected the owner’s application and he will be required to remove the addition.

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Supporting Landmark Designations

The Landmarks Commission completed several important initiatives in 2016 that the Conservancy had backed, designating 12 Midtown East landmarks and 27 from its “backlog” list, as well as many others that we supported. Going forward the LPC will be working under new constraints: the City Council passed legislation setting deadlines on future designations.

The LPC had placed on its calendar as early as 1966, but never designated. The commissioners voted unanimously for 27 new landmarks across the five boroughs. The Conservancy played an integral role in this effort. We opposed the LPC’s original plan, which would have removed all 95 from the calendar without a public hearing. We worked with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and our preservation colleagues to develop a proposal with an orderly review of the sites, without straining LPC resources. At public hearings in 2015, we testified in support of most, and recognizing that LPC designation was not the appropriate recommendation for a handful that were severely altered or were protected by others. Between the 27 landmarks, the Commission removed nearly all other buildings from the calendar without comment on the matter, allowing that they could be brought back for consideration in the future. Many were removed for lack of support from owners and local elected officials. The Law does not require this support, and we hope that the Commission has not set its own dangerous precedent with this rationale.

The end of 2016 brought the end of the Landmarks Commission’s “back- log” initiative, the plan to address a group of 95 buildings and sites that the Commission had placed on its calendar as early as 1966, but never designated. The Commissioners voted unanimously for 27 new landmarks across the five boroughs. The Conservancy played an integral role in this effort. We opposed the LPC’s original plan, which would have removed all 95 from the calendar without a public hearing. We worked with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and our preservation colleagues to develop a proposal with an orderly review of the sites, without straining LPC resources. At public hearings in 2015, we testified in support of most, and recognizing that LPC designation was not the appropriate recommendation for a handful that were severely altered or were protected by others. Between the 27 landmarks, the Commission removed nearly all other buildings from the calendar without comment on the matter, allowing that they could be brought back for consideration in the future. Many were removed for lack of support from owners and local elected officials. The Law does not require this support, and we hope that the Commission has not set its own dangerous precedent with this rationale.

Landmarks Commission Backlog update

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Visit nylandmarks.org to sign-up for our E-Newsletter that provides the latest information on landmark designations, alerts to crucial preservation issues, tours, events, and more.
Providing Technical Expertise

“In the eighty-five years since its opening, the Waldorf Astoria has become a symbol of the cultural and social history of New York City, an exceptional example of the Art Deco style and synonymous with exceptional service: it is an architectural icon known around the world as “New York’s Unofficial Palace.”

From Conservancy research sent to the Landmarks Preservation Commission supporting our call to landmark the Waldorf Astoria public rooms.

Waldorf Astoria Hotel, Manhattan

The Conservancy has been at the forefront of championing the preservation of the great public rooms at the legendary Waldorf Astoria Hotel. The building changed hands in 2015 and the new owners, Anbang Insurance Group, plan major changes.

In late summer, we met with three executives from Anbang, to discuss their company’s plan for the future of the landmark. They will shut down the hotel for two years beginning in March, 2017, and convert it to a residential condominium with hotel use on the lower stories. In our meeting we expressed our belief that the proposed reuse could occur without demolishing or defacing the historic public interiors that are so significant. They stated that they were opposed to any interior landmark designation that would protect the important public spaces.

We visited the Waldorf to photograph the public rooms and determine which of these spaces merited designation. We prepared a detailed report with floorplans that show the most important spaces. This report was sent to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The report makes the case that the artistic and cultural importance of the public interiors such as the Park Avenue Lobby, the Main Lobby, Peacock Alley, the Grand Ballroom, Silver Corridor and the Starlight Roof are extraordinary. We urged the Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate all the significant public interiors of the hotel so as to protect them for future generations.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission did set up a number of meetings with the new owners and must have convinced them to accept designation of the most important spaces. The result was that the Commission calendared for designation all the spaces we identified in our report with the exception of the Starlight Roof. The Commission plans to designate the interiors in 2017.

1155 Park Avenue, Manhattan

1155 Park Avenue is an imposing 13-story apartment building on the corner of East 92nd Street that was built in 1914 and designed by architect Robert T. Lyons. The Conservancy prepared a two-part historical report for the board of directors of the building. They commissioned the report so as to better understand the historic importance of their building and to help guide a potential façade cleaning and restoration project. Of particular interest was the original color palette of the building’s facades as intended by its prolific architect.

The facades have never been cleaned and the textured brick favored by Lyons have become heavily soiled and dark. Cleaning the façade would result in a very dramatic visual change to the appearance of the building, which was intended to have a very light palette of buff brick and limestone trim. Some residents are wary of such a change and want a better idea of what to expect. We researched the architect and located several other apartment buildings built nearby from the same period. They all employed the same buff brick for the facades. Some of the other buildings have been cleaned giving a good idea of what they originally looked like. We also determined that 1155 Park was a trend setter due to its early date of construction. Many of the subsequent apartment buildings on Park Avenue copied the light color palette used on 1155. This pale palette was popular all through the 1920’s along with the more contrasting red brick and limestone palette of the new-Grecian style that started to appear after WWI.

The building's board of directors has asked the Conservancy to continue our involvement as consultants as they decide on a scope of work for the restoration project.

Facade cleaning tests undertaken by Jablonski Building Conservation were performed in early November. The firm, hired at our recommendation, used nine different cleaning agents as well as various dilution ratios. Based on these tests, which set out to remove a hundred years of grime, cleaning specifications will be written and incorporated in the building documents prepared by the building's engineer. The Conservancy has played an important role advising the building's board from the inception of the project.

Initially, the Conservancy prepared a two-part historical report. The building's board commissioned the report to better understand the historic importance of their building and to help visualize what the facades looked like originally. Lyons employed a very similar color palette of materials on other East Side buildings, some of which have been cleaned. These give a good idea of what 1155 will look like after cleaning. The heavily textured light-colored brick favored by the architect in the pre-WWI era, tends to become heavily soiled. Cleaning the façade will result in a dramatic visual change to the appearance of the dark gray building, which was intended to have a light palette of buff brick and limestone trim. We continue to work with the building's board of directors and engineers on the specifications for the work and later will help select a contractor and see the job to its completion.

Project Guidance Highlights

Waldorf Astoria Hotel, Manhattan

The Conservancy has been at the forefront of championing the preservation of the great public rooms at the legendary Waldorf Astoria Hotel. The building changed hands in 2015 and the new owners, Anbang Insurance Group, plan major changes.

In late summer, we met with three executives from Anbang, to discuss their company’s plan for the future of the landmark. They will shut down the hotel for two years beginning in March, 2017, and convert it to a residential condominium with hotel use on the lower stories. In our meeting we expressed our belief that the proposed reuse could occur without demolishing or defacing the historic public interiors that are so significant. They stated that they were opposed to any interior landmark designation that would protect the important public spaces.

We visited the Waldorf to photograph the public rooms and determine which of these spaces merited designation. We prepared a detailed report with floorplans that show the most important spaces. This report was sent to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The report makes the case that the artistic and cultural importance of the public interiors such as the Park Avenue Lobby, the Main Lobby, Peacock Alley, the Grand Ballroom, Silver Corridor and the Starlight Roof are extraordinary. We urged the Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate all the significant public interiors of the hotel so as to protect them for future generations.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission did set up a number of meetings with the new owners and must have convinced them to accept designation of the most important spaces. The result was that the Commission calendared for designation all the spaces we identified in our report with the exception of the Starlight Roof. The Commission plans to designate the interiors in 2017.

1155 Park Avenue, Manhattan

1155 Park Avenue is an imposing 13-story apartment building on the corner of East 92nd Street that was built in 1914 and designed by architect Robert T. Lyons. The Conservancy prepared a two-part historical report for the board of directors of the building. They commissioned the report so as to better understand the historic importance of their building and to help guide a potential façade cleaning and restoration project. Of particular interest was the original color palette of the building’s facades as intended by its prolific architect.

The facades have never been cleaned and the textured brick favored by Lyons have become heavily soiled and dark. Cleaning the façade would result in a very dramatic visual change to the appearance of the building, which was intended to have a very light palette of buff brick and limestone trim. Some residents are wary of such a change and want a better idea of what to expect. We researched the architect and located several other apartment buildings built nearby from the same period. They all employed the same buff brick for the facades. Some of the other buildings have been cleaned giving a good idea of what they originally looked like. We also determined that 1155 Park was a trend setter due to its early date of construction. Many of the subsequent apartment buildings on Park Avenue

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE - The New York Landmarks Conservancy’s Technical Services Department provides countless hours of one-on-one advice and technical assistance to building owners throughout the City. From site visits to referrals, we do whatever we can to answer specific questions about building repairs and rehabilitations. We also help owners understand the New York City landmarks regulatory process by explaining the standards involved in each repair and the steps needed to acquire a permit from the City. Technical Services helps regular people understand how historic preservation affects them, and we offer practical recommendations that address a wide variety of questions and issues.

Waldorf Astoria Hotel, Manhattan

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We continue to work with the building’s board of directors and engineers on the specifications for the work and later will help select a contractor and see the job to its completion.
Gould Memorial Library, University Heights, Bronx

The Conservancy received a request from the Bronx Community College Foundation for an emergency grant to assist in necessary repairs to the threshold below the bronze double doors at the main entrance to the Gould Memorial Library. The bronze doors were a tribute to Stanford White and were installed several years after the building was finished. They are extremely heavy monumental doors and their weight has stressed the original iron lintel beneath the base of the doors resulting in a large crack at the center of the stone threshold and various other cracks at the bases of the stone frame around the entrance. The stones at the threshold were beginning to split.

A grant for $20,000 from our Emergency Grant Fund was awarded to the non-profit foundation associated with the College for the replacement of the existing iron lintel beneath the threshold with a modern steel lintel. The work necessitated removing several pieces of carved stonework at the base of the entry and at the threshold. The work is now complete. The new steel beam has been installed and the pieces of stone that rest above it, re-installed and repaired. The work was completed successfully.

The great domed library, one of the City's Beaux Arts masterpieces, was originally the centerpiece of New York University's uptown campus. It is often described as architect Stanford White's greatest surviving work. Today it is the symbolic center of Bronx Community College, which took over the NYU campus in the 1970's.

American Academy of Arts and Letters A 1799 wood frame farmhouse, remarkable for its survival, is undergoing a new campaign of restoration and interior rehabilitation. The project calls for a two-part ramp to be built at the back of the house that can take visitors up to the rear porch and into the house. Ironically, although the architect's plans call for the house handicap accessible, the Department of Buildings has raised objections to various details, mostly on the second floor, that do not comply with ADA requirements in the new building code. The Conservancy has been retained by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation to shepherd the projects through the approval process. We have obtained approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission and are in the process of obtaining waivers from the Department of Buildings.

One of the objections from the Department of Buildings is that second floor doorways are too narrow. We are arguing that the original 1799 doorways are significant historic fabric and should not be altered to make them two inches wider, especially on the second floor where there is no wheelchair access in the first place.

Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn

The Conservancy received a request from the Brooklyn Historical Society for an emergency grant to address flooding issues in the building's basement. The rainwater would enter the building from a sunken area away at the side yard, which would fill with water during heavy downpours and overwhelm the existing floor drain. The excess water would then leak into the building. Our emergency grant for $10,000 paid for a new pump, placed in the area-way that would be triggered by high water and would eject the rainwater up and out of the side yard through piping as well as other measures to prevent excess runoff from the adjacent building's garden. The work was completed in July and after two very heavy rainstorms the Museum informs us that there has been no flooding. The building, originally known as The Long Island Historical Society, at the corner of Pierrepont and Clinton Streets was designed by George B. Post and built in 1876-81. It is an outstanding building architecturally and was an important part of the nineteenth century cultural hub built in this part of Brooklyn Heights that also included the Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Brooklyn Art Association and the Mercantile Library. Only the Historical Society remains on its original site.

TWA Terminal, JFK Airport, Queens

The Port Authority of NY and NJ (PA) scheduled a number of meetings with the consulting parties in 2016. At the February meeting, their architects presented the newest reworking of the proposal that would shift the connectors between the landmark building and the new hotel wings. Originally, two underground tubes were to be built to connect the wings but this proved infeasible and the architects now propose to link the wings via the original “Flight Tubes” that currently connect the landmarks with the Jet Blue Terminal. The new openings within the historic tubes would be cut approximately halfway along their lengths. The PA also updated the committee on their meetings with three community Boards in Queens that border the airport. Additionally, the status of the restoration was discussed as were the architectural details of the new hotel wings.

The private preservation groups were not in favor of the current scheme as it was determined to be overly large. The prior scheme, which was similar, was approved by all. That proposal called for 300 hotel rooms, the new scheme calls for 500. Nonetheless the signatory parties including the State Historic Preservation Office and The Advisory Council for Historic Preservation have allowed the scheme to move forward. The final meeting of the Section 106 Consultative Parties was in June. The Port Authority informed us in August that the FAA has recently approved the Environmental Assessment (EA) and made a finding of No Significant Impact for the TWA Flight Center Hotel. This is a green light to proceed with the project.

The ground breaking for the new hotel and conference center behind the landmark Flight Center was on December 15. The Conservancy, in its role as Consulting Party, has been involved with the restoration and redevelopment of the site for over fifteen years. The PA announced that they will keep providing us with updates on the construction process through 2017.

Moynihan Station, Manhattan

The New York State Urban Development Corporation and its subsidiary Empire State Development have proposed a series of changes contained in a “Supplement” to the Moynihan Station General Project Plan (GPP). The changes are endorsed by the Moynihan Development Corporation. We were invited to submit our comments as part of the public hearing process. The Conservancy wrote an official statement approving the proposed additions to the GPP, which includes rules governing the tenants of the new facility as well guidelines for commercial uses. The Supplement also specifies the restoration aspects of the proposal.
New York Public Library, Mid-Manhattan Branch

The Conservancy's chairman, president, and director of technical services met with the CEO of the New York Public Library, Ms. Weinshall, as well as the project team that has been retained to redesign the Mid-Manhattan Branch Library, which is housed in a six-story office building diagonally across Fifth Avenue from the Landmarked Main Library, now known as the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. The plan is to completely upgrade the mid-Manhattan branch library and temporarily move all of its books across the street to the Main Library until the work is completed. All the books in the historic building's main stacks have been relocated to new stacks under Bryant Park or to an off-site facility. Other nearby branches will share the Mid-Manhattan clients until it re-opens. The new interiors in the mid-Manhattan library will be designed by the Dutch firm of Mecanoo Architecten, with senior partner Francine Houben in charge. She was at the meeting as was Elizabeth Leder from Beyer Blinder Belle, who is the US partner on the job. Ms. Weinshall, promised to keep us updated on the new designs.

Concurrently, several historic rooms in the Schwartman Building will be opened for the first time, making more of the landmarked library open to the public. The grand Gottesman Exhibition Hall on the main floor will exhibit rare objects from the Library's collection that have rarely been seen publicly viewed. Lastly, the restoration of the ceiling of the Rose Reading Room is moving forward. The project has been delayed by the discovery of asbestos but the work is ongoing and will be completed this year. We were told that the permanent use of the main building's stacks, after the role of a swing space, has not yet been determined.

246 East 58th Street, Modulightor Building, Manhattan

Paul Rudolph designed this mixed-use retail/residential building in 1979-88. It is one of his last works in the United States. Rudolph's late work is primarily in the Far East, Indonesia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. The ground floor houses the Modulightor store, which sells light fixtures designed by Rudolph or adapted from designs. For a number of years, Rudolph's architectural office was in the mezzanine level above the lighting store. Upstairs are two duplex apartments. The façade is notable for its abstract interplay of verticals and horizontals. It is unlike anything else on the block. The building is not yet eligible to be a city landmark because it is not quite thirty years old. Nevertheless, the Conservancy has advised the owner to begin discussions with the Commission. The owner of the house reached out to the Conservancy via mutual friends at the New York chapter of DoCoMoMo. He had questions about how best to ensure the preservation of the building, including a possible sale of unused air rights or an easement donation.

King Manor Museum

Jamaica Avenue & 150th Street, Jamaica, Queens

The Rufus King House now known as the King Manor Museum is a wood-framed clapboarded manor house dating originally from 1735-55 with additions from 1810 and 1830. Due to its historical importance, it was among the earliest buildings designated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in the mid-1960s. Rufus King was a delegate to the Continental Congress. Technical Services staff toured the house and grounds with the Museum's executive director to inspect and review the various repair and restoration challenges facing the building. The house's roof in particular needs attention and an Emergency Preservation Grant was discussed to address particularly decayed areas that could irreparably damage historic fabric if left as is. We were informed after our visit that the City, which owns the house, announced that it had the funds set aside for a major roof and siding project for the house in early 2017. An emergency grant to deal with leaks was therefore not needed by the Museum as they are hoping for a much more inclusive roof, gutter and siding renovation funded by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Red Hook Lane, Downtown Brooklyn

A one-block long street in downtown Brooklyn that is the last surviving remnant of an ancient Native American trail that also served as an important early Dutch colonial path. The City is looking to de-map the street in order to utilize its development rights and possibly to create a superblock. We spoke with various City officials and alerted the community, which is not at all supportive of any plan to erase Red Hook Lane. Our current understanding is that the City is no longer pursuing the de-mapping but we will keep an eye on future developments.

Old Guard Headquarters, 307 West 91st Street, Manhattan

The Old Guard of the City of New York is a veteran's organization founded in 1833 as The New York Light Guard. Their present status is that of an "independent military command, existing under and by virtue of its ancient rights and privileges," which own their headquarters building on West 91st Street, which is within the boundaries of the Riverside Drive-West End Historic District, designated in 1989. It is a large four-and-a-half story house, designed by noted Manhattan architect Clarence True in the Renaissance Revival style. Built in 1897-98, it is one of a row of seven houses. The seven are not identical but are unified by the use of rusticated limestone masonry on the first stories, a common cornice, and mansard roofs. The facades are arranged so that they alternate between all-limestone fronts and limestone-and-brick fronts.

The house is crowned with a mansard roof containing two large dormer windows topped by swans-neck pediments. The roof was originally covered with barrel tiles (as can be seen next door at no. 309) but is now clad with white asphalt shingles. The building cornice as well as the frames of the dormer windows are pressed zinc painted black.

The overall condition of the house is fair to poor. The Conservancy prepared a conditions report in 2005, which prioritized the need to replace the flat, built-up roof behind the mansard and to repair two anchors on the rear fire escape. A recent site visit in August confirmed that the recommendations of the report were headed by the group. A new built-up roof was installed and repairs were made to the rear fire escape. The organization now wishes to tackle other projects and asked the Conservancy back for more of our advice and counsel. Among other smaller items we believe that the front part of the roof, which was originally a barrel tile mansard roof, should be the next project. The Conservancy recommended roofer's familiar with historic roofs and the Guard has contacted two of the firms. The Old Guard now has bids for the repairs and is preparing an application requesting an Emergency Grant from the Conservancy for the repairs.
The director of technical services was invited by the National Park Service to serve on the Advisory Board of the Mather High School on West 49th Street in Manhattan. The full name of the school is Stephen T. Mather Building Arts &Craftsmanship High School. It is a New York City Department of Education Career Technical Education (CTE) High School.

The advisory board makes recommendation regarding the implementation of the CTE programs and their enhancement—such as field trips to ongoing projects. We are also expected to provide summer internships for at least one of the students. The intern would be paid through the Department of Education. The school offers a standard Regents academic curriculum with the addition of technical education in the building and landscape trades with emphasis on high-quality craftsmanship and the specialized building arts, such as historic preservation. The School is co-sponsored by the National Parks Service. Students are taken to ongoing projects at a variety of Park Service sites such as Fort Jay on Governor’s Island and other historic sites on Long Island and in the Hudson Valley. In late October, the Advisory Board approved a set of By-Laws. The Conservancy is engaged with the students’ professional development and will seek to provide them with examples of real life challenges facing professionals who are engaged in conservation and restoration projects in the City.

The impetus for the school is that the fields of preservation, conservation and restoration require workers who understand the shared basic philosophy underlying these disciplines and the necessary skills that these professions entail. The Conservancy is now engaged with the students’ professional development and will seek to provide them with examples of real life challenges facing professionals who are engaged in conservation and restoration projects in the City.

Bishop Laughlin High School and Bishop’s Residence

357 Clermont Avenue, Brooklyn

A circa 1920’s Catholic high school in the Fort Greene Historic District. The private school is well attended and has a high number of students from low and moderate income families who are on scholarship. The large school building has several issues including leaks from the parapets and window maintenance problems. We are advising them on how best to proceed on these issues and also on a Landmarks Commission violation that predates the current school administration. The school also owns a magnificent Second Empire mansion, known as the Bishop’s House, adjacent to the school. The circa 1870’s house is built of gray granite and was designed by the noted and prolific church architect Patrick Keely. It is in relatively good condition except for the wooden windows, which appear original. We are urging the school to begin a restoration campaign for the old windows and have offered an emergency grant to address the ones in the worst condition.

Monograph of architect Robert H. Robertson

The Conservancy has agreed to act as financial agent for the author of a new book on the work of an important but overlooked Beaux-Arts architect Robert H. Robertson. The author has received a grant from the Foun- dation to cover photography costs and the cost of reproducing archival images. He asked that the Conservancy hold and administer this grant. The publisher is Monacelli Press. The book has a strong Preservation message and the Conservancy will be prominently credited.

Lecture for the Lower East Side Preservation Initiative

An illustrated lecture was given by the director of Technical Services on March 8th on the topic of new buildings built within historic districts and the Landmarks Preservation Commissions approach to determining appro- priateness for new buildings and large additions.

Fund Staff Services - Providing Architectural Expertise

New Yorkers are fortunate to be surrounded by diverse examples of architecture dating from the 18th to the 20th century. Owners of these historic buildings need access to objective, technical expertise to be able to care for them. Nationally recognized for its expertise, the Conservancy’s Technical Services program provides exactly that to owners of residential, religious, public, and commercial buildings.

Through the Preservation Hotline, the Conservancy fields questions about building repair, project management, and contractor referrals. For issues that cannot be resolved over the phone, the staff makes site visits and meets with owners, architects, and contractors. In some cases, we provide conditions reports, historical research, maintenance plans, or feasibility studies.

You can contact the Preservation Hotline with your questions at 212.995.5280 or by email at info@nylandmarks.org.

Conservancy staff also serve as project advisors, offering assistance with requests for proposals, budgets, grant applications, nominations for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, certification of rehabilitations for federal investment tax credits, and local and state design review approvals.

144-152 Nassau Street (left) and 75 Park Row, designs by architect Robert H. Robertson

Mather High School, 439 West 49th Street, Manhattan

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Preserving Sacred Sites

“We are in grateful receipt of your generous grant and extend to you our heartfelt thanks. As our sanctuary stood seemingly in ruins, it was easy to despair. Yet we dared let hope float, got to work, and reached out for help. You proved to be the team of angels we needed to assuage our fears and reduce the weight of the burden. May God continue to bless the work of your hands.”

The Rev. Dr. Sean B. Murray, Pastor
The First Congregational Church of Riverhead

SACRED SITES PROGRAM - The New York Landmarks Conservancy’s Sacred Sites program offers congregations throughout the entire state of New York financial and technical assistance to maintain, repair, and restore their historic buildings. The program was launched in 1986 and is the only statewide program in the nation responding to the preservation needs of historic religious properties. Since its inception, Sacred Sites has awarded 1,389 grants totaling more than $9.9 million to 760 congregations throughout New York, regardless of denomination. These grants have leveraged restoration projects totaling almost $620 million. The program offers a range of matching grants, to suit a variety of projects: Consulting Grants of up to $7,500, Sacred Sites grants of up to $10,000, and both Sacred Sites Challenge grants and Jewish Heritage Fund Challenge grants of up to $75,000.

From Unsafe to Rejuvenated: A Sacred Sites Success Story

The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) contacted the Conservancy for help addressing hazardous conditions and Department of Buildings (DOB) violations Union Baptist Church, a contributing component of the Greenpoint Historic District. Brick was falling from the rear elevation and from buttresses at the side elevations, and sections of the rotted wood cornice had fallen, breaking opalescent stained glass windows. The congregation had dramatically declined in membership after World War II, and its interior is a time capsule of water damaged stenciled finishes, modified gas light fixtures, and original pews. With fewer than 40 members in the 1990’s, the congregation continued to decline to the point that there was no one left to maintain the building.

The red brick Union Baptist Church was completed in 1863 and is among Brooklyn’s finest early Romanesque Revival style church buildings, featuring a central gable flanked by towers, trimmed with an elaborate arched and corbeled cornice. The Conservancy shared our grant records with LPC, helping LPC Deputy Counsel John Weiss to track down the last known member of the congregation. Happily, a thriving Queens congregation, Open Door Baptist in Astoria, had established a satellite congregation in Greenpoint in 2011, and was willing to take on the daunting task of renovating the building.

Sacred Sites staff inspected the church with LPC Deputy Counsel John Weiss, DOB Forensic Engineer Matthew Millner, Rev. Pete Montoro of Open Door Baptist, Rev. Michael Newburger, of the start-up North Brooklyn Baptist Church, and the pastor’s consulting engineer Anthony Gennaro. When the rear and side elevations began actively losing bricks, DOB had installed a temporary tarp covering at the rear elevation, overlooking a neighboring yard, and protective scaffolding at a side alleyway. The site visit confirmed that while there were active leaks at the rear balcony, where the towers join the main roof, failing brickwork at the side and rear elevations, and loose sections of wood cornice and stained glass at the front elevation, the over one-hundred-year old asbestos shingle roof had done a remarkable job of keeping the main sanctuary dry, and the church was generally sound and remarkably intact.

The Conservancy provided a referral to restoration contractor Burda Construction, who immediately, and affordably, repaired the buttresses, satisfying DOB’s most pressing concern. The pastors set to work energetically raising funds for stabilization and restoration of the exterior, raising over $200,000 at an Independent Baptist Church conference in Oklahoma, identifying a Texas roofing contractor to provide roofing materials and labor at cost, and raising community awareness with a website video and local press coverage. The Conservancy provided a $25,000 challenge grant towards roof replacement and masonry repairs. The church has gone on to restore the wood cornices and temporarily brace stained glass windows. They plan to begin worshipping in the habitable ground floor of the church, and gradually renovate the sanctuary as funds allow.

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-Union Baptist Church, Greenpoint, Brooklyn (before restoration)
-Contractors replacing wood cornice and installing new roofs at tower and sanctuary gable
-Cornice detail after restoration

Exterior, First Congregational Church of Riverhead, Long Island
photo: Joel Snodgrass
The Conservancy’s challenge grant of $35,000 to Old First Presbyterian Church, Huntington, Long Island, for the restoration of the upper stages of the church’s bell tower and spire, was celebrated with a check ceremony at the church in December. The church was the first public building constructed in Huntington following the end of British occupation during the Revolution, and is not just saving bricks and mortar just for the sake of it, because some- where a building is located. The entire city benefits from these structures. Not just because these 180 nonprofit-owned landmarks, an important public benefit. Fisher noted: “Landmarks are not just about the neighborhood where they’re located. The city benefits from these structures. Not just because we’ve enriched every time we look at them, but also because it brings us pride and a sense of community.”

In commemoration of the Sacred Sites Program’s 30th anniversary, the Conservancy held two lectures. On April 7th, popular speaker and architectural historian David Garrard Lowe gave an illustrated lecture, “Where Angels Tread: New York’s Wondrous Houses of Worship” at the landmark St. Jean Baptiste Roman Catholic Church. On May 3rd, Conservancy members filled Park East Synagogue’s beautiful Moorish Revival sanctuary for “Reinventing Religious Landmarks for the 21st Century: Serv ing Communities in Beautiful Spaces, an Interfaith Discussion,” an opportu nity to hear from prominent clergy in leadership at historic NYC religious institutions about the day-to-day opportunities and challenges posed by their beautiful and historic facilities.

Professor Andrew Dolkart of Columbia University’s Historical Preservation program moderated the panel, mentioning that he had worked on the 1984-1985 surveys of historic religious properties which led to the launch of the Conservancy’s Sacred Sites program thirty years ago. Rabbi Sheinert at Park East, the Rev. L. Kathleen Liles, Rector of Christ & Saint Stephen’s Episcopal Church on the Upper West Side, and Father Anthony Andreassi, Parochial Vicar of the Gretna Church of St. Boniface in downtown Brooklyn, spoke about the ways their congregations have adapted their historic facilities to accommodate 21st century programming.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, an international advocate for human rights and religious freedom, spoke of his Vienna childhood, witnessing the destruc tion of his synagogue on Kristallnacht in 1938. This personal experience led him to advocate for the now-126-year-old synagogue’s landmark designation in 1979, after a developer approached him with a plan to replace the synagogue with a 4-story apartment tower with community space for the synagogue’s use. Instead, via a property swap with the Fire Department, the synagogue redeveloped the site to the immediate north, constructing a modern-day school, with offices and function rooms. Fa ther Andreassi spoke about how the architecture, beauty and history of the church, along with renovations and new music and educational pro gramming, has contributed to the growth and revitalization of the parish from 30 people to 1000 households since 1999. Rev. Liles noted that “God works in mysterious ways,” with the renovation of the interior of Christ and St. Stephen’s coming as a result of a disaster, the collapse of the ceil ing in 2004, which exposed beautiful original stenciled finishes, sealed and invisible behind walls and ceilings installed when the church was expanded in 1937. Liles noted that the parish is continually adapting and improving the landmark site for contemporary needs: over the last 15 years projects have enabled the church to host a feeding program serv ing 95 people daily, an active concert series, the launch of a new nursery school and a landscaped front garden.

Former City Council Member, land use attorney and lobbyist Ken Fisher, Esq. noted that very few individually designated religious landmarks have been able to unlock the real estate dollars embodied in their unrealized, un-built “air rights,” by transferring these air rights from their landmark properties to other sites for development, thereby generating income for landmark maintenance and mission. Ken Fisher introduced Landrix, a proposed land use remedy for the 180+ individually designated religious and nonprofit-owned institutions in the city which have not been able to sell their air rights to an adjacent high rise development. Fisher noted that over a 30-year period, this proposed air rights transfer mechanism would generate $600 million for the preservation and maintenance of these 180 nonprofit-owned landmarks, an important public benefit. Fisher noted: “Landmarks are not just about the neighborhood where they’re located. The city benefits from these structures. Not just because we’ve enriched every time we look at them, but also because it brings us pride and a sense of community.”

Prof. Dolkart concluded, “Buildings have lives. Buildings aren’t just brick and mortar that stands there vacant and meaningless; buildings are about people. By preserving the building, you’re preserving the use that goes into it. That’s not unique to religious buildings, but all landmarks: residential, institutional, religious and public buildings. The Conservancy is not just saving bricks and mortar just for the sake of it, because some one thinks it’s pretty on the street, but to make these buildings useful, vital parts of our communities into the future.”

The Conservancy holds two lectures. On April 7th, popular speaker and architectural historian David Garrard Lowe gave an illustrated lecture, “Where Angels Tread: New York’s Wondrous Houses of Worship” at the landmark St. Jean Baptiste Roman Catholic Church. On May 3rd, Conservancy members filled Park East Synagogue’s beautiful Moorish Revival sanctuary for “Reinventing Religious Landmarks for the 21st Century: Serving Communities in Beautiful Spaces, an Interfaith Discussion,” an opportunity to hear from prominent clergy in leadership at historic NYC religious institutions about the day-to-day opportunities and challenges posed by their beautiful and historic facilities.

Professor Andrew Dolkart of Columbia University’s Historical Preservation program moderated the panel, mentioning that he had worked on the 1984-1985 surveys of historic religious properties which led to the launch of the Conservancy’s Sacred Sites program thirty years ago. Rabbi Sheinert at Park East, the Rev. L. Kathleen Liles, Rector of Christ & Saint Stephen’s Episcopal Church on the Upper West Side, and Father Anthony Andreassi, Parochial Vicar of the Gretna Church of St. Boniface in downtown Brooklyn, spoke about the ways their congregations have adapted their historic facilities to accommodate 21st century programming.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, an international advocate for human rights and religious freedom, spoke of his Vienna childhood, witnessing the destruction of his synagogue on Kristallnacht in 1938. This personal experience led him to advocate for the now-126-year-old synagogue’s landmark designation in 1979, after a developer approached him with a plan to replace the synagogue with a 4-story apartment tower with community space for the synagogue’s use. Instead, via a property swap with the Fire Department, the synagogue redeveloped the site to the immediate north, constructing a modern-day school, with offices and function rooms. Father Andreassi spoke about how the architecture, beauty and history of the church, along with renovations and new music and educational programming, has contributed to the growth and revitalization of the parish from 30 people to 1000 households since 1999. Rev. Liles noted that “God works in mysterious ways,” with the renovation of the interior of Christ and St. Stephen’s coming as a result of a disaster, the collapse of the ceiling in 2004, which exposed beautiful original stenciled finishes, sealed and invisible behind walls and ceilings installed when the church was expanded in 1937. Liles noted that the parish is continually adapting and improving the landmark site for contemporary needs: over the last 15 years projects have enabled the church to host a feeding program serving 95 people daily, an active concert series, the launch of a new nursery school and a landscaped front garden.

Former City Council Member, land use attorney and lobbyist Ken Fisher, Esq. noted that very few individually designated religious landmarks have been able to unlock the real estate dollars embodied in their unrealized, un-built “air rights,” by transferring these air rights from their landmark properties to other sites for development, thereby generating income for landmark maintenance and mission. Ken Fisher introduced Landrix, a proposed land use remedy for the 180+ individually designated religious and nonprofit-owned institutions in the city which have not been able to sell their air rights to an adjacent high rise development. Fisher noted that over a 30-year period, this proposed air rights transfer mechanism would generate $600 million for the preservation and maintenance of these 180 nonprofit-owned landmarks, an important public benefit. Fisher noted: “Landmarks are not just about the neighborhood where they’re located. The city benefits from these structures. Not just because we’ve enriched every time we look at them, but also because it brings us pride and a sense of community.”

Prof. Dolkart concluded, “Buildings have lives. Buildings aren’t just brick and mortar that stands there vacant and meaningless; buildings are about people. By preserving the building, you’re preserving the use that goes into it. That’s not unique to religious buildings, but all landmarks: residential, institutional, religious and public buildings. The Conservancy is not just saving bricks and mortar just for the sake of it, because someone thinks it’s pretty on the street, but to make these buildings useful, vital parts of our communities into the future.”
Fifth Annual Sacred Sites Open House Weekend

The 6th annual state-wide Sacred Sites Open House was held May 21st and 22nd. It was the largest open house ever, with 68 New York City sites among 150 sites participating statewide, with an estimated 8,000 visitors. The weekend featured 10 pre-booked, “insider” docent tours of unique New York City Sacred Sites, with one in each borough, and several in Manhattan, including Madison Avenue Presbyterian and the Astoria Center of Israel, whose tour of Art Deco Murals was co-sponsored by the Art Deco Society.

One visitor brought her two young children to visit the historic Church of the Resurrection on the Upper East Side.

“It's absolutely beautiful and we plan to come again.”

The Sacred Sites Open House initiative was inaugurated in 2011 in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Sacred Sites program. The Open House has three objectives: to encourage sacred sites to open their doors to the general public as a means of building broad community support for the ongoing preservation of historic institutions; to inspire residents to be tourists in their own town, introducing non-members to the history, art and architecture embodied in sacred places, and developing a local cultural tourism ethos to support these important places; and to publicize the many programs and services religious institutions offer their neighbors, benefiting the entire community.
Sacred Sites and Consulting Grants

The New York Landmarks Conservancy awards Sacred Sites and Consulting Grants to congregations that are planning or undertaking the restoration of historic religious properties. In 2016, the Sacred Sites program pledged a total of $212,150 in the form of 31 grants to 29 religious institutions throughout New York State.

To be eligible, properties must be located in New York State, owned by a religious institution and actively used for worship, and listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places or designated pursuant to a local landmarks ordinance by New York State. Eligible properties include churches, synagogues, meetinghouses, mosques, and temples. The maximum Sacred Sites grant is $10,000. In 2016, the average Sacred Sites grant award for bricks-and-mortar repair and restoration was about $7,100. The maximum Consulting Grant, for project planning costs, is $7,500. In 2016, the average award for Consulting Grants was about $6,300.

2015 Grantees include: (listed by borough/city)

Albany
Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Albany
$5,000 - Protective Glazing Replacement

Bronx
Christ Church Riverdale
$2,000 - Church Door Restoration

Broome
Sarah Jane Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church, Johnson City
$10,000 - Protective Glazing and Door Refinishing

Genesee
First Presbyterian Church, Batavia
$7,000 - Stained Glass Window Restoration and Repair

Greene
Kaaterskill United Methodist Church, Tannersville
$10,000 - Foundation Structural Repair

Herkimer
Snells Bush Church, Little Falls
$7,000 - Repair of Foundation Sill

Kings (Brooklyn)
Cedarmore Memorial Congregational Church, Clinton Hill
$10,000 (SSP) $3,500 (Cons.) Roof and Masonry Repairs and Construction Management of Roof Repair Project

Congregation Kol Israel, Crown Heights
$7,500 - Construction Documents & Management for Rear Wall Restoration

Jewish Center of Brighton Beach
$7,500 - Construction Documents for Flood Mitigation, Masonry Restoration, and Roof, Flashing and Gutter Repair

Kingsway Church, Little Falls
$7,000 - Repair of Foundation Sill

New York (Manhattan)
Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, United Methodist, Upper West Side, $7,500 - Architectural Study of Church and Parsonage

Epiphany Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Harlem
$7,500 - Construction Documents for New Slate Roof

John Street United Methodist Church, Financial District
$7,500 - Exterior Conditions Survey

New Bethel Way of the Cross Church of Christ, Harlem
$7,500 - Conditions Report, Construction Documents, and Project Admin.

St. Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church, Upper West Side
$2,500 - Engineering Services to Guide Construction Phase of Basement Vault Waterproofing Project

Vedanta Society of New York, Upper West Side
$10,000 - Front Stoop and Façade Restoration

Onondaga
Church of the Saviour, Syracuse
$9,000 - Roof Repair

Orange
St. John’s Episcopal Church, Canandaigua
$6,000 - Repair and Restoration of Stained Glass Windows and New Protective Glazing

St. John’s Episcopal Church, Warwick
$4,000 - Replacement of Front Door and Restoration of Side Door

New Life Pentecostal Church, Newburgh
$10,000 - Roof Replacement

Queens
Congregation Tifereth Israel, Corona
$7,500 (Sacred Sites) $7,500 (Conservancy) - Foundation Waterproofing and Construction Documents

St. Thomas Church, Bath
$10,000 - Construction Documents for New Slate Roof and Bluestone Masonry Restoration

St. James A.M.E. Zion Church, Harlem
$8,000 - Repair Damaged Sections of Roof Trim and Install Gutters and French Drains

St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Kingston
$10,000 - Asbestos Removal and Roof Replacement at Attached Education Wing

Saugerties Reformed Church
$5,000 - Existing Conditions Report

In 2016, the Sacred Sites program pledged a total of $212,150 in the form of 31 grants to 29 religious institutions throughout New York State.
Jewish Heritage Grants

The Jewish Heritage Fund allows the Conservancy to make challenge grants of between $25,000 and $75,000 to assist major repair and restoration projects at New York City synagogues.

In 2016, three grants were awarded, totaling $125,000. The average grant pledge in 2016 was about $41,000. Since its launch in 2010, the program has pledged 13 challenge grants totaling $620,000, facilitating over $6.3 million in restoration projects.

2016 Grantees include:
(listed by borough/city)

Kings (Brooklyn)
Congregation Ahavas Israel of Greenpoint
$25,000 - Masonry Façade Restoration and Roof Replacement

Congregation B'hai Israel Anshei Emes
(Kane Street Synagogue), Cobble Hill
$50,000 - Restoration of Masonry Façades and Structural Repairs to Towers

Jewish Center of Brighton Beach
$50,000 - Flood Mitigation, Masonry Restoration, and Roof, Flashing and Gutter Repair

Sacred Sites Challenge Grants

Sacred Sites Challenge grants of $25,000 to $75,000 are awarded statewide, for major restoration projects at historic houses of worship of all denominations.

In 2016, 10 grants were awarded, totaling $280,000, with the average pledge totaling $28,000. These grants helped fund over $4.8 million in comprehensive masonry, slate roof, and steeple restoration projects.

2015 Grantees include:
(listed by borough/city)

Dutchess
St. Thomas' Church, Amenia Union
$25,000 - Repair and Repointing of Exterior Masonry

Kings (Brooklyn)
Union Baptist Church, Greenpoint
$25,000 - Reconstruct Brick Masonry at Rear Wall, Replace Roof

New York (Manhattan)
Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Upper West Side
$25,000 - Church Door, Stained Glass, and Masonry Restoration

Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Upper West Side
$40,000 - Façade Masonry and Slate Roof Restoration

St. Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church, Upper West Side
$25,000 - Repair/Waterproofing of Basement Vault Ceiling, Re-leveling of Stone Steps

Oneida
Tabernacle Baptist Church, Utica
$30,000 - Roof, Tower, Steeple and Spire Restoration

Suffolk
Old First Presbyterian Church, Huntington
$35,000 - Steeple Restoration

Westchester
Peekskill Presbyterian Church
$25,000 - Steeple Restoration

St. John’s Episcopal Church
$25,000 - Pleasantville, Roofing, Masonry and Drainage Repairs to Church and Parish Hall

St. Peter’s Church
$25,000 - Peekskill, Restoration of North Slope of Slate Roof, Bell Tower Structural Frame, Roof, and Masonry
Funding Historic Properties

“Conservancy staff helped at every step of the journey, from selecting the best design team to negotiating with our contractor. As an architect in New York City, I have experienced the best and worst of construction projects. The Conservancy helped us put together a “dream team” for our co-op’s largest construction project in its 49 year history. I could not imagine our renovation being possible without their knowledge, guidance and expertise.”

- Adam Weintraub, AIA
Co-op President, 799 Greenwich Street (at West 12th Street)

HISTORIC PROPERTIES FUND - Established in 1982, the New York City Historic Properties Fund is the Conservancy’s main financing vehicle for restoration work throughout New York City. With over $3 million in assets, it is one of the largest revolving loan funds for historic preservation in the nation. Since its inception, the Fund has made over $26.5 million in investments - more than $36 million in loans and $423,000 in grants - for restoration work on 250 buildings in the five boroughs of New York City. The Fund’s lending record continues to be exemplary, with near zero losses on loan repayments.

Fund loans are geared toward underwriting restoration work on small residential properties in the lower- and moderate-income historic districts of New York City, as well as historic properties owned by nonprofit organizations and religious institutions.

Loans on one-to-four family row houses generally range between $80,000 and $150,000; loans for multi-family apartment buildings and nonprofit facilities are usually in the $200,000 to $300,000 range. Collateral on residential properties is usually a first, second, or third mortgage; security on religious buildings and nonprofit facilities is most often in the form of assignments of assets. Interest rates are usually 5% to 7%, but may be as low as 3% for more needy borrowers; terms are generally between five and ten years.

Fund loans are advanced for essential structural repairs and exterior restoration work which often has a visual impact on the surrounding community. Loans have helped to restore brownstone facades, replace windows and doors, rehabilitate stoops and porches, repair roofs and drainage systems, replace missing cornices, rebuild brick walls, and carry out a variety of other work which maintains the structural and aesthetic integrity of historic buildings.

Project management assistance is an important component of the Fund program. Fund staff work closely with borrowers to develop loan packages that are tailored to their specific needs.

Project management assistance is provided throughout the loan process. With outside professionals, Fund staff help borrowers to define a scope of work, prioritize components of the project, engage qualified architects, engineers, and contractors; monitor construction; and ensure that all work is performed correctly. The importance of such assistance, particularly in the planning stages of projects, cannot be overstated. Property owners often lack objective expertise in identifying and prioritizing the needs of their buildings. In many cases, they retain contractors and craftspeople who are unfamiliar with historic buildings. Unnecessary, inappropriate, or overly aggressive measures may be taken which result in irreversible damage and wasted financial resources.

Highlights from the 2016 Projects of the Historic Properties Fund

The Fund closed its 250th loan at the end of 2016 and completed an array of projects totaling $650,000 in restoration costs during the year. They included the following:

245 MacDonough Street
Stuyvesant Heights Historic District, Brooklyn
245 MacDonough Street is located in a row of three-story plus basement Italianate row houses built in 1872 for Curtis L. North, one of the earliest groupings in the Stuyvesant Heights Historic District. Featuring segmental arches over the doorways and windows, this building has been in the family of its current owner since the 1930s.

A Fund loan of $100,000 secured by a third mortgage financed cornice restoration as well as 10 new wood windows on the front façade and 11 new aluminum windows on the rear. The project architect was gormanschweyer, and A. Malek Contracting performed the cornice restoration work. Historical Windows of New York fabricated and installed the windows.
405 Bainbridge Street
Proposed Stuyvesant East Historic District, Brooklyn

Constructed circa 1890, 405 Bainbridge Street is a Romanesque Revival-style row house in a group of nine similar two-story plus basement buildings that use both rusticated and flat brownstone in their design. All of the buildings here have retained much of their original detail, including fine ironwork on their stoops. The property is located in the proposed Stuyvesant East Historic District, an area surveyed in the 1970s by the Landmarks Preservation Commission but not yet designated as an historic district. It was deemed eligible for listing in the National Register by the New York State Historic Preservation Office, qualifying it for the $90,000 Fund loan that underwrote brownstone façade and stoop restoration. Ayon Studios Architecture and Preservation was the project architect, and Excellent Contracting LLC was the contractor. As the building was not within a city-regulated historic district, the Fund program ensured that the work was designed and performed in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

343 West 122nd Street
Manhattan Avenue National Register Historic District, Manhattan

343 West 122nd Street is one in a row of Queen Anne-style row houses built c. 1885. The property is located in a small, three-block National Register Historic District in Harlem. The brownstone façade restoration of this property became the longest running project in Fund history. A Fund loan of $60,000 closed in 2008. Personal circumstances in the owner’s life prevented her from moving forward expeditiously. Finally, Kaitsen Woo Architects was hired and prepared plans and specifications in 2011. He became disabled in 2012, and the project stalled for several months. Mary Kaye Judy was later engaged as the new preservation consultant to complete the project in accordance with Mr. Woo’s plans. But by 2013, brownstone restoration prices had risen beyond the available proceeds in the Fund loan. Fund staff oversea two rounds of bidding with brownstone restoration contractors, but none responded with acceptable prices. Finally, the owner agreed to provide $15,000 of her own funds, and Progeny Restoration was hired in 2015 for the project. By mid-2016, the restoration work was completed. – 8 years after the Fund loan closed.

237 DeKalb Avenue
Fort Greene Historic District, Brooklyn

In 1976, 237 DeKalb Avenue was purchased to relocate the thrift store/ tailoring business of one of the current owners. Times and circumstances changed, and the owners retired. A wine shop currently occupies the retail space of this three-story Italianate building constructed in 1887 by William Bedell. There are two apartments above the store, which is typical for the ten neighboring buildings constructed along with 237 DeKalb Avenue at that time. Neither of the current owners – now a mother and daughter – reside there now; it serves as a small investment property for them.

A Fund loan of $100,000 was used to finance window replacements on the front and rear facades, as well as restorative alterations to the storefront. The firm of Two4Design Architecture was the project architect, and Burda Construction was the general contractor. Additionally, Fund staff prepared and processed a Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit application which yielded $18,906 in federal income tax savings for the owners.

The Fund closed its 250th loan at the end of 2016, and completed an array of projects totaling $650,000 in restoration costs during the year.

799 Greenwich Street
Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan

799 Greenwich Street was one of two, six-story buildings that were designed by James M. Farnsworth and constructed in 1890 for Joseph D. Eldridge. They were combined in 1967 as part of the unusual history that follows. In 1963, a group of artists living in Greenwich Village formed the Committee for Artists’ Housing (“Committee”) with the idea of converting the two loft buildings at 797 and 799 Greenwich Street into housing for themselves. They persuaded The J.M. Kaplan Fund to purchase the buildings in the City of New York in 1963. Over the next four years, the Committee worked with local politicians to amend New York State’s Multiple Dwelling Law so that artists could both live and work in loft buildings legally.

In 1967, with financial assistance from the Kaplan Fund, the Committee renovated and combined the buildings into 12 live/work units, half with 1,070 square feet and half with 1,725 square feet, and selected the artists who would live there. In 1972, the Kaplan Fund established a cooperative apartment corporation and sold the property to it at a nominal price. In essence, this project was the first cooperative to be established as live/work space for artists – a forerunner to nearby Westbeth Center for the Arts, a larger (383 units) Kaplan Fund-initiated housing endeavor. Current occupants—shareholders include architects, a clay sculptor, painters, a film editor, a cartoonist/illustrator, a photographer, a film archivist, and a graphic designer.

An Historic Properties Fund loan of $300,000 was used to finance roof and masonry work. Thomas A. Fensman was the project architect, and Preservation Building Restoration Management was the general contractor.

Fund Staff Services – Obtaining New York State Rehabilitation Tax Credits for Homeowners

Update on New York State Rehabilitation Tax Credits for Homeowners

In 2010, the State enacted new programs to foster investment in historic commercial and owner-occupied residential properties. The Homeowner program provides a state income tax credit to property owners for 20% of qualifying rehabilitation costs, up to a credit value of $50,000 for restoration work on historic residential buildings. Cooperative apartment buildings are also eligible, as the income tax credits flow through to shareholders. The program has a sunset date of 2019 after a five-year renewal in 2014.

There is a three-part application process: Part 1 confirms a project’s eligibility, Part 2 provides a more detailed description of the project work and its cost, and Part 3 requests certification of the completed work.

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Assisting Nonprofits and the Public Sector

“We are indebted to many people who helped with the window restoration project and most certainly, the Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy’s grant made it all possible. We can now see the outside world from inside the light house.”

- Erin Urban, Executive Director, The Noble Maritime Collection
In 2016, the Conservancy continued to assist the Rossville A.M.E. Zion Church with future planning for its landmark properties in the “Sandy Ground” section of Staten Island. Once a free black community of people working in the oyster trade, Sandy Ground thrived from the 1830s to about 1900 when the polluted waters of New York ended the oyster business. There are few buildings and sites from this era that are still there. The Church wishes to conserve what remains and to foster recognition of Sandy Ground as a heritage tourism destination.

The Cemetery: As set forth in great detail in the Conservancy’s 2015 Annual Report, the Conservancy and Richmond County Savings Foundation supported the preparation of a Cultural Landscape Report for the cemetery. The purpose of the Report was to help the Church to maintain and restore the cemetery. A major surprise of the investigation was the locatary of more than 500 unmarked graves there via a ground penetrating radar survey of the one-acre site. Unmarked graves are typical of earlier African burial customs, while church members believed that some existed, the number identified was much more than anticipated.

On July 11, a press conference was held at the cemetery to announce the findings of the Report. It was well-attended by members of the church, most of whom had relatives buried there. There was also extensive local newspaper and TV coverage (WCBS, WNBC, NY1, Daily News and Staten Island Advance). Surprisingly, there was also national and international (Canada, Great Britain, India, Japan, New Zealand, and South Africa) reporting about the project.

The Cottages: The Church also owns two landmark-designated cottages across the street from the church building at 565 and 569 Bloomingdale Road. The small frame houses were constructed between 1887 and 1889 and are some of the few surviving buildings from the era when Sandy Ground was a prosperous, free black community. The church now rents them and asked for Conservancy assistance with respect to their restoration. As a first step, the Conservancy provided a grant of $2,500 from the City Ventures Fund to engage Easton Architects, which prepared a conditions survey along with recommendations for restoration work and cost estimates.

Robbins Reef Lighthouse – New York Harbor

Robbins Reef Lighthouse dates from 1839 and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Located in the Upper New York Bay, Robbins Reef’s primary historical significance lies in the story of Katherine Robbins, who took over lighthouse duties when her husband John died in 1893. His last words to her were, “Mind the light, Kate.” In 1894, the Lighthouse Board officially appointed her keeper, and she maintained the light station from then until 1919.

The Lighthouse is owned by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1966 were removed to expose a multitude of defects, interventions, damage, and deterioration. Fortunately, as preserved in their current state, all windows are still viable for a careful and complete restoration procedure.” He then removed the windows and took them back to his workshop to carry out a myriad of conservation treatment on them. The lighthouse is now naturally lit for the first time in half-a-century.

Next chapter for the Erasmus Academy Building…

2015 Update: At the beginning of 2016, Erasmus Alumni and the Conservancy posted a petition on Change.org, urging the Mayor and other city officials to take steps to preserve the Erasmus Academy Building. In the course of the year, over 2,200 signatures were obtained, but no significant action was taken to stabilize the building. Fortunately, some Alumni spoke directly to Brooklyn Borough President (BBP) Eric Adams at an open house that he held in the spring. He knew the building and expressed interest in preserving it. Pursuant to meeting with his staff and then visiting the Academy Building, the Conservancy had CTA Architects update its 2010 conditions survey and costs of the work needed to protect the structure from water penetration – an amount of $17.2 million. By year end, the BBP’s office expressed support for including the protection and restoration work into the city’s next capital budget for the fiscal year beginning in July 2017 and was working with Erasmus Alumni and the Conservancy to secure the participation of the City Council in the budget allocation. The capital budget will be determined in the first half of 2017, and all parties are hopeful that all or a good part of the $2 million will be forthcoming. With basic protection work underway or accomplished, the next challenge will be the occupancy of the building.

Prior to 2016: The Conservancy has been involved with this 1787 wooden building since 2010, when it commissioned a conditions report for its restoration. The Erasmus Academy Building had, at that time, stucco cladding, free black community, which prepared a conditions survey, along with recommendations for restoration work and cost estimates.

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Honoring Excellence

“Throughout my career at the State Historic Preservation Office, I have had the privilege of working with the New York Landmarks Conservancy to protect historic resources and to bring historic preservation into the mainstream of community planning efforts in New York City and throughout our great State. The Lucy G. Moses Award is an enormous honor from a remarkable partner!”

* Ruth Pierpont
Lucy G. Moses Preservation Leadership Award Recipient

Ruth Pierpont received the Preservation Leadership Award for her many contributions to the field. Pierpont retired in 2016 as Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation and Director of the New York State Office of Historic Preservation. There, she helped create the State historic tax credits, which have produced thousands of jobs and generated billions of dollars of investment. Under her supervision, New York’s National Register program led the country in the number of listings and was a trailblazer in listing under-recognized property types—including those representing ordinary Americans, and significant to the LGBT community. Pierpont was instrumental in preserving the South Street Seaport, landmark buildings on Roosevelt and Governors Islands, and Ellis Island. After 9/11, she played a significant role in coordinating salvage and evaluating the impacts to historic properties at the World Trade Center site. Pierpont served two terms as President of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, directing national efforts for preservation support and programs.

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and Council member Daniel R. Garodnick (4th District) share the Preservation Public Leadership Award for co-chairing the East Midtown Steering Committee, and ensuring that landmarks have a significant role in this major rezoning plan. The Steering Committee was formed to provide a planning agenda, following the collapse of a 2013 Bloomberg-administration proposal. Garodnick, the local council member, was instrumental in withholding Council support for that measure, which the Conservancy had opposed as it ignored preservation and threatened the great masonry buildings surrounding the Terminal.

Unlike that proposal, the Steering Committee insisted that LPC act quickly, to designate new landmarks before the rezoning’s public review began. The agency designated 12 landmarks in late 2016 and Garodnick supported all 12 when they came for Council affirmation, despite opposition from a powerful real estate company which owns two of the designated properties. Landmarks are integral to the rezoning, as they will be able to transfer their development rights throughout the area, generating resources for restoration and maintenance; part of which will create a fund for public realm improvements.

Gale Brewer has been a champion of landmarks since she represented the Upper West Side on the Council, when she won an individual Public Leadership Award. She has been Manhattan Borough President since 2014. Dan Garodnick represents Manhattan’s East Side from Carnegie Hill to Murray Hill. He was elected in 2005 and will be term-limited out in 2017.

The Episcopal Diocese of New York Property Support Program received the Preservation Organization Award as an innovative program that should serve as a model for other denominations throughout the City and State. It provides financial and technical assistance to over 100 parishes which are either locally-landmarked or listed on the National and State Registers. 50 years ago, the Diocese recognized the challenge of caring for these buildings as it strives to fulfill its mission, and implemented a bold and comprehensive program that assists congregations with capital repairs. Since just 2006, Property Support has made almost $10 million in loans and grants; projects range from a few hundred dollars to research historic paint colors to $150,000 to solve structural problems or replace historic roofs.

MOSES AWARDS - The Lucy G. Moses Preservation Awards are the Conservancy’s highest honors for excellence in preservation. The coveted awards are named for Lucy Goldschmidt Moses, a dedicated New Yorker whose generosity has benefited the City over many decades. Since 1991, the Awards have recognized more than 280 individuals, organizations, and building owners for their extraordinary contributions to the City.

The New York Public Library’s grand Rose Reading Room - 476 Fifth Avenue, New York
Lucy G. Moses Project Award

The Episcopal Diocese of New York Property Support Program
St. James’ (Fordham), Bronx re-slating roof

The Honorable Gale Brewer
The Honorable Daniel Garodnick
Ruth Pierpont, former New York State Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

Throughout my career at the State Historic Preservation Office, I have had the privilege of working with the New York Landmarks Conservancy to protect historic resources and to bring historic preservation into the mainstream of community planning efforts in New York City and throughout our great State. The Lucy G. Moses Award is an enormous honor from a remarkable partner!”

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Since 1991, the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Awards have recognized more than 280 individuals, organizations, and building owners for their extraordinary contributions to the City.
Celebrating Living Landmarks

“Having just become a Living Landmark I want to take this opportunity to pay homage to all the magnificent and historical architectural landmarks that grace our City and are enhanced and protected by the Landmarks Conservancy which performs such extraordinarily noble work.”

- Financier and philanthropist Larry Leeds
2016 Living Landmarks Honoree

23rd Annual Living Landmarks Celebration

For more than two decades, The New York Landmarks Conservancy has honored New Yorkers who have made extraordinary contributions to the City and recognizes them as Living Landmarks at a black-tie gala. The 23rd annual celebration was held on November 2 at The Plaza in honor of acclaimed author and film producer Barbara Taylor Bradford, OBE and Robert Bradford, financier and philanthropist Larry Leeds, musician and composer Wynton Marsalis, physician and media executive Mary Lake Polan and Frank Bennack, and Zagat Co-Founders Nina and Tim Zagat. The evening raised close to $1 million for the organization’s programs and services. Phil Smith and Bob Wankel of The Shubert Organization, and recognized as Living Landmarks in 2015, served as Honorary Co-Chairs. The Living Landmarks Celebration is a “must attend” on New York’s social calendar and attracts trend-setters and opinion leaders from across the City’s unique “only in New York” intersections of art, commerce, education, entertainment, fashion, finance, government, and media. In addition to being a fun and festive evening, the gala provides critical support for the Conservancy’s unique financial and technical assistance programs.
first row
Wynton Marsalis
Festive party guests, photo by Noël Sutherland

second row
Janet Ross & Gordon Steen
Gloria & Richard Moylan
Gus Christensen & Courtney Booth Christensen
Shelley Doctors & Stephanie Preuss

third row
Meenakshi Srinivasan & Christina Davis
Mary McFadden

All Living Landmarks photos on page 43 by Hal Horowitz, unless noted

first row
Barbara Taylor Bradford, OBE, Lindsay Wagner, & Robert Bradford
Lloyd Zuckerberg & Peg Braen
Barbara & Donald Tober

second row
Frank & Barbara Sciame
Frank Bennack & Mary Lake Polan
Charlie Berry & Kathryn McGraw Berry with Sallie & Justin Abelow

third row
Sandy & Stan Warshawsky
Melie & John Spotford, photo by Hal Horowitz
Christina Chang & Michael Braze, photo by Hal Horowitz
Lewis E. Cullman & Louise Hirshfield Cullman, photo by Hal Horowitz

fourth row
Tim & Nina Zagat with Paul Binder

All Living Landmarks photos on page 44 by Noël Sutherland, unless noted
Chairman’s Award Luncheon

The Landmarks Conservancy’s Chairman’s Award is one of the industry’s most esteemed honors recognizing exceptional individuals and organizations that have demonstrated their dedication to New York by protecting and celebrating the City’s world-renowned historic architecture.

At a luncheon on March 9, at The Metropolitan Club, the Landmarks Conservancy presented its 2016 Chairman’s Award to Apple Inc. The award was accepted by Christopher Peak, its Senior Director Head of Retail Design & Direct Sourcing for Real Estate and Development.

Apple was honored for their contribution to preserving, restoring, and repurposing notable historic structures in New York City. The company has placed four stores in historic buildings—marrying high tech and distinguished architecture in Grand Central Terminal (an individual New York City landmark), 103 Prince Street (SoHo Historic District), 401 W 14th Street (Gansevoort Market Historic District), and 540 Madison Avenue (Upper East Side Historic District).

Professional Circle Tours

The Conservancy offers a wide variety of networking, promotional, and educational activities for its Professional Circle members, an active group of real estate, design, development and construction professionals, preservationists, property owners, and businesses interested in the art, architecture, and history of New York.

Professional Circle members are invited to exclusive tours of restoration projects throughout the year. Tours included St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, The Town Hall, Green-Wood, Ellis Island, South Street Seaport, and Woodlawn Cemetery. Ed Meade, Director of Historic Preservation at Silman, gave a talk on projects his firm is working on in the country of Georgia.

Continuing its partnership with Evergreene Architectural Arts, the Conservancy presented a series of hands-on workshops titled “Understanding Traditional Techniques in Historic & Contemporary Spaces” on murals, plaster, stained glass, and decorative finishes.

Conservancy President Peg Breen filming a Tourist video at Hamilton Grange

Other Landmarks Conservancy Events

Conservancy members enjoyed a hoot of events throughout the year including a curator-led tour of Affordable New York, an exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York, an illustrated talk on the importance of preserving historic houses by Deborah Ryan and Frank Vagnone, “Where Angels Tread: New York’s Glorious Houses of Worship” by David Lowe at St. Jean Baptiste Catholic Church, behind-the-scenes tours of Grand Central Terminal, Governors Island, the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, a panel discussion on the importance of preserving our historically important houses of worship at Park East synagogue, and the release of “Historic Preservation: At the Core of a Dynamic New York City,” the Conservancy’s unprecedented report on the economic impact of protecting our cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history.

General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen Lectures

In 2016, the Conservancy continued its partnership with the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of the City of New York and members were invited to a four-part series titled “Landmark Lectures.” Subjects included Modern Ruin: A World’s Fair Pavilion, Renovations at the Guggenheim Museum, Conservation Programs for Mid-Century Modern Structures, and Life, Death and Rebirth of the TWA Flight Center.

Other Landmarks Conservancy Events

Conservancy members enjoyed a host of events throughout the year including a curator-led tour of Affordable New York, an exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York, an illustrated talk on the importance of preserving historic houses by Deborah Ryan and Frank Vagnone, “Where Angels Tread: New York’s Glorious Houses of Worship” by David Lowe at St. Jean Baptiste Catholic Church, behind-the-scenes tours of Grand Central Terminal, Governors Island, the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, a panel discussion on the importance of preserving our historically important houses of worship at Park East synagogue, and the release of “Historic Preservation: At the Core of a Dynamic New York City,” the Conservancy’s unprecedented report on the economic impact of protecting our cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history.

Mystery Photo Contest & Tourist Video Series

The Landmarks Conservancy continued its popular Mystery Landmark contest and Tourist In Your Own Town video series.

The Mystery Landmark was launched in January 2011 and was an instant hit. It’s a monthly competition to identify a close-cropped image of a New York City landmark. Winners receive a set of the Conservancy’s walking tour books or other publications.

The first episode of Tourist In Your Own Town was posted to YouTube in August 2011. The series invites New Yorkers and visitors alike to explore the City’s extraordinary abundance of historic landmarks. A total of 44 videos have been produced through the end of the year, and the entire series has been viewed more than 100,000 times.

2016 Tourist In Your Own Town videos included Congregation Ansche Chesed, Thur Lady of Lebanon Church, Hamilton Grange, the National Lighthouse Museum, and the Mt. Vernon Hotel Museum.

Supporting Preservation Education

To support the next generation of architects, engineers, and design and construction professionals, in 2014, the Conservancy formed a partnership with Bronx International High School, which is housed in the landmark Morris High School designed by C.B.J. Snyder.

The partnership is meant to expose juniors and seniors in their Preservation Technology Program to the profession of historic preservation and the various career paths in the building conservation and restoration fields.

Conservancy President Peg Breen filming a Tourist video at Hamilton Grange

Bronx International High School students tour Governors Island

Behind-the-scenes tour of the South Side of Ellis Island

Historian Jeff Richman leads a tour at Green-Wood, an 1838 rural cemetery in Brooklyn

Julie Sloan of Stained Glass Consultants led a tour at St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue

Conservancy Chair Lloyd P. Zuckerberg and Christopher Peak from Apple Inc.
Financial Statements

Statement of Activities

Year Ended December 31, 2016

Support and Revenue

Contributions $ 2,565,641
Special Events, net of direct benefit to donor 820,855
Investment return used for operations 276,849
Program services income 21,550

Total Support and Revenue $ 3,844,495

Expenses

Program $ 2,057,398
Development 790,057
Administration 320,085

Total Expenses $ 3,167,540

Net Assets

Program $ 2,057,398
Development 790,057
Administration 320,085

Total Net Assets $ 11,608,882

Change in Net Assets

Program $ 2,057,398
Development 790,057
Administration 320,085

Total Change in Net Assets $ 609,058

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2016

Assets

Cash and cash equivalents $ 4,050,074
Pledges receivable 160,000
Loans receivable 65,423
Due from NYCHP Fund, Inc. 42,459
Prepaid expenses and other assets 10,000
Investments 5,805,319
Property and equipment, net 33,583
Prepaid expenses and other assets 10,000
Due from NYCHP Fund, Inc. 42,459
Loans receivable 65,423
Pledges receivable 160,000

Total Assets $ 12,673,122

Liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities 2,781
Grants payable 765,343
Deferred rent 108,920
Due to New York City Historic Properties Fund, Inc. 78,000
Amounts held for other agencies 109,196

Total Liabilities $ 1,064,240

Net Assets

Unrestricted

Undesignated 706,540
Board Designated 7,073,268
Total Unrestricted 7,779,808
Temporarily Restricted 1,432,006
Permanently Restricted 2,967,068

Total Net Assets $ 11,608,882

Net Assets, Beginning $ 10,999,824

Change in Net Assets $ 609,058

Net Assets, Ending $ 11,608,882

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Photography submitted by project organizations or Conservancy staff, unless noted
Photo on page 2 of Peg Breen by James Salzano

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