



May 21, 2024

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL PARK - 3201 AMBOY ROAD AS AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK

Good morning Chair Carroll and Commissioners. I am Blaire Walsh, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy supports designation of Frederick Douglass Memorial Park (FDMP) as an individual landmark.

This site merits designation as a recognition for both its history and design. FDMP was established in 1935 as a cemetery for African Americans. Both the de facto segregation prevalent in New York prior to the Civil Rights Movement and the increase in the City's African American population from the Great Migration led to the need for a cemetery intended for and operated by African Americans.

An estimated 60,000 interments have taken place since the cemetery's founding. Among the musicians, business people, and public figures, notable interments include singers Rosa Henderson and Mamie Smith, baseball players Elias "Country" Brown and King Solomon "Sol" White, the founder of the Commandment Keepers, and six inmates killed in the Attica Correctional Facility uprising in 1971. FDMP has also had a strong connection to Harlem, and many personalities from the Harlem Renaissance are interred at the cemetery.

FDMP is a serene oasis surrounded by busy Staten Island residential neighborhoods and commercial strips. The picturesque park features curved paths, green landscapes and flat monuments. A memorial to Frederick Douglass was dedicated in 1961.

We are pleased to have worked with leadership at the cemetery on maintaining their historic administration building. We provided an \$11,000 Emergency Grant for replacing damaged portions of the roof in 2020. A \$4,000 Neighborhood Technical Assistance Grant in 2023 funded a conditions assessment report.

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park is an important historic landscape that holds significant African American history. We appreciate that the Commission has brought this designation forward and urge a swift designation vote.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.