



April 16, 2026

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS TO DEMOLISH 165 WEST 86TH STREET– WEST PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK, ON THE GROUNDS OF HARDSHIP

The New York Landmarks Conservancy continues to oppose the application to demolish West Park Presbyterian Church, an individual landmark. This statement addresses an issue related to the Conservancy that the applicant raised in the March 27, 2026 response submission, posted on the Landmarks Commission website.

On page 13, the applicant questions a 2023 estimate for repairs to the building, made by Old Structures, which was much lower than the applicant's estimate from a similar timeframe, and different from a 2011 report that the Conservancy commissioned.

We found Old Structures' estimate of \$9.1 million for exterior façade repair costs to be unrealistically low because it so greatly diverges from that of the Church's own professionals, as well as the estimate of \$14.6 million prepared by Sciame in 2011 (\$20.9 million in 2025 dollars), which was commissioned by the Landmarks Conservancy. Don Friedman himself participated in the team that prepared that report in 2011. It is inexplicable why, 15 years later, the cost has dropped by a third.

It is actually quite explicable. The Conservancy commissioned the report, titled West Park Presbyterian Church Exterior Restoration Phasing Plan, in 2011 as a tool for fundraising. As the name suggests, the scope of work was broken out into several phases, to allow for discrete projects to be completed as funds became available, an approach that has been successful for many building owners, whether they be non-profits, commercial owners, or homeowners. It was understood that this approach could potentially lead to some duplicative costs, if phases were undertaken at different times. Further, while Don Friedman of Old Structures Engineering was a member of the project team, he was one of several professionals, and did not author the entire document.

As Friedman noted in the 2023 Old Structures report,

The projected cost depends on the goal of the repair work. A minimalist goal is simply to make the current conditions safe, to allow the removal of the bridge and curing of the DoB violations. That scope of work will solve the current problems, but new problems will develop over time. All facades deteriorate from weathering, which is why the DoB's facade-inspection program requires re-evaluation on a five-year cycle. A maximalist approach is immediately to repair every known current condition to full historic-restoration standards. While admirable in its result, this is not required by

either DoB or LPC regulations. There are various compromise options in between those two extremes.

The Conservancy's experience with restoration projects, and with West Park, comports with this statement. The 2011 Phasing Plan, and the 2023 Old Structures report are both compromise options. The goals of the reports are similar, to clear violations and make some improvements. They both demonstrate that there is a way forward to repair this building that does not rely on the "maximalist approach" that is in the hardship application. However, despite the applicant's incredulity, it is no surprise that the numbers are different since the projected timing and scope are not exactly the same. Therefore, the 2011 plan does not negate the 2023 report.

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