



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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COMMISSION LANDMARKS TWO WPA-FUNDED PARKS DEPARTMENT RECREATIONAL CENTERS IN THE BRONX AND QUEENS

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously designated as landmarks the Astoria Park Pool and Play Center in Queens and the Orchard Beach Bathhouse and Promenade in the Bronx, citing their superb design, setting and scale.

Both facilities were constructed in the 1930s during the administration of Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia, at the height of the Great Depression. They were built under the supervision of Parks Department Commissioner Robert Moses with funds from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), created by former President Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of the New Deal.

"These two remarkable facilities are vivid reminders of the ambition and vision it took to improve the lives of tens of thousands of New Yorkers during an extremely difficult time," Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney said. "Both projects made creative use of modest materials, and took advantage of their natural surroundings to offer spectacular vistas to people who needed relief from city life."

"The newly designated landmarks are two of New York City's historic treasures," said Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "These vestiges of the early 20th century undoubtedly will be enjoyed by future generations of New Yorkers and provide them with a wonderful way of connecting to the City's past."

The Astoria Park Pool and Play Center

The Astoria Park Pool, with a capacity of 6,200 people, was one of 11 vast new WPA-funded outdoor pools that were opened across the City in the summer of 1936 by Mayor LaGuardia and Commissioner Moses, who was an avid swimmer and took particular interest in the creation of the pools.

Embedded in what is now a densely wooded slope that descends to the water's edge, the Astoria pool complex is distinguished by westward vistas that are framed by the Hell Gate and Triborough bridges. Among the more striking features of the play center, which is built in the Art Moderne style, are the whimsical saucer-like roofs atop the upper portion of the filter house. The comfort station is designed in a similar style. At 54,450 square feet, the Astoria pool is the city's largest public pool and hosted the swimming, water polo and diving trials for



the United States Olympic Team prior to the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin.

The Orchard Beach Bathhouse and Promenade

Located in Pelham Bay Park, and fronting the Long Island Sound, Orchard Beach was constructed between 1934 and 1937. Commissioner Moses took a special interest in the project, which called for the construction of a gigantic recreation area with a mile-long beach that was once dubbed the “Riviera of New York City.”

The complex includes a 200,000-square-foot Modern Classical-style bathhouse and a wide promenade influenced by Beaux-Arts principles. The concrete, brick and limestone bathhouse, embellished with tile and terrazzo finishes, features two monumental colonnades that radiate outward from a raised central terrace. The famed crescent-shaped promenade, which follows the curve of the beach, is paved with hexagonal blocks and edged by cast-iron railings bearing a nautical motif. Moderne-style concession and supply buildings, park benches, drinking fountains and modernistic lampposts line the promenade.



Orchard Beach, a major feat of engineering and architecture, and the City’s most ambitious park project under the New Deal, is considered

to be one of the most remarkable public recreational facilities ever constructed in the United States.

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission is the largest municipal preservation agency in the United States. Since its creation in 1965, the Commission has designated more than 23,000 buildings in all five boroughs, including 1,140 individual landmarks, 106 interior landmarks, nine scenic landmarks and 85 historic districts.