



## The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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### **MORNINGSIDE PARK BECOMES A SCENIC LANDMARK, THE CITY'S FIRST SINCE 1983**

*Olmsted and Vaux's Rugged Oasis Added to Roster of Landscape Design Team's Other New York City Landmarks: Central Park, Prospect Park, Riverside Park and Drive and Ocean and Eastern Parkways*

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously granted scenic landmark status to Fredrick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Morningside Park in Manhattan, citing its unusual topography, scenic views and noteworthy public sculptures. The designation brings to 10 the total number of scenic landmarks in New York City. The last one to earn landmark status was Fort Tryon Park, in 1983.



"Olmsted and Vaux managed to tame the park's difficult terrain and turn it into one of the most picturesque places in New York City by respecting and enhancing its inherent beauty," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "The park's designation as a landmark, combined with the exceptional stewardship of the Parks Department, means this masterwork will retain its special character for generations to come, and I am extremely pleased to be part of a decision that secures its future."

"I am thrilled that Morningside Park has been officially designated a scenic landmark, capping our efforts to restore and improve this historic park over the last two decades," said Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "This is one of a handful of NYC parks designed by Olmsted and Vaux, and fittingly it joins a pantheon of other scenic landmarks by the duo or their firm that include Central Park, Prospect Park and Riverside Park. With a great community partnership in place and its future secured as a scenic landmark, it is truly morning again in Morningside Park."

Located on along a rocky ledge extending from 110<sup>th</sup> to 123<sup>rd</sup> streets and between Morningside Drive and Manhattan Morningside Avenues, the park is comprised of approximately 30 acres that were excluded from the street grid under a proposal by Andrew Haswell Green, a commissioner and comptroller of Central Park. Olmsted and Vaux developed a design for the park in 1873 that was revised 14 years later, partly because of a sharp decline in the city's economy. Such important institutions as Columbia University, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and St. Luke's Hospital decided to build along Morningside Drive across from the park before it opened in 1895.



*More*

Morningside Park features a massive buttressed masonry retaining wall with a parapet, overlook bays, imposing entrance stairways, natural rock outcroppings, and curving pathways across the site. It also boasts three important sculptures: Lafayette and Washington (1890, by Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi, the sculptor of the Statue of Liberty); the Carl Schurz Monument (1909-1913, by sculptor Karl Bitter and architect Henry Bacon, who is responsible for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.) and Bear and Faun/Seligman Fountain (c. 1910, by Edgar Melville Walter, a sculptor and student of Auguste Rodin).



Samuel Bowne Parsons, Jr., a partner of Vaux and parks superintendent who was one of the country's leading landscape architects in the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and was responsible for several other New York City parks, called Morningside Park one of Vaux's "most consummate piece of art that he ever created."

The park's 20<sup>th</sup> century history was marked by a number of intense debates surrounding three different proposals that called for using part of the site for a Catskill Aqueduct pumping station, a gymnasium for Columbia University and a new public school. Only the school was constructed.

The last park to receive scenic landmark designation was Fort Tryon Park, in 1983. The other eight scenic landmarks and dates of designation are: Bryant Park (1974), Central Park (1974), Riverside Park and Riverside Drive (1980), Verdi Square (1975), Eastern Parkway (1978), Grand Army Plaza (1974), Ocean Parkway (1975) and Prospect Park (1975).

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The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the mayoral agency responsible for protecting and preserving New York City's architecturally, historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. Since its creation in 1965, LPC has granted landmark status to more than 25,000 buildings, including 1,200 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks and 92 historic districts in all five boroughs.