

CB#9 Committee on Parks and Landmarks

Minutes of Meeting of March 14, 2005

Present: Carolyn Kent and Chantay Taylor, Co-Chairs; Gladys Tinsley, Patricia Jones, Savona Bailey McClain, Sophie Johnson, John Reddick, Walter South, Board Committee members; Dale Dobson and Jeff Nulle, Public Members;

Nicole Smith, Parks for Parks; Daniel Siegel, Pro Management Assocs., architect under contract to HPD for restoration of 824 St. Nicholas Avenue; Brendan Fleming, Urban Fellow in the office of Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC DOT; Ellen Baxter, Executive Director, Broadway Housing Communities, Yuien Chin, Executive Director, Hamilton Heights/West Harlem Community Preservation Organization.

Plans were presented by Daniel Siegel of Pro Managements Assocs., Newark, NJ, the architect under contract to HPD, for installation of four new storefront areas at below grade level within the easterly façade, along St. Nicholas Place, of the six story apartment house at 824 St. Nicholas Avenue which is through the TIL program undergoing conversion to cooperative status as an HDFC. The current mixture of aluminum/glass and bricked up storefronts will be entirely replaced by an extended glass front with a solid metal bulkhead for the below grade base section, recessed roll down gates, a flat aluminum signage panel along the top, and will provide four open rectangles of commercial space, 800 to 1000 sq. ft. each, with bathrooms in the back. These will bring rental income to the building. The storefronts will be set back 4 ½ ft. from the grade drop off and entrance stairs will be provided at each end of the storefront row. A new steel fence, 42" high, spindles given a 5" gap, will protect pedestrians from falls at grade drop.

In discussion, it was suggested that the number of lights be increased from two, that the fence be coordinated with the fence on the westerly side of the building along St. Nicholas Avenue. Concern centered in the absence any members of the tenant management team and our need to know that they approved of this plan before supporting it. It was agreed that we would consult with the tenants and request that the LPC hold #824 off its C of A schedule until we could act in the General Board meeting of April 21st.

Brendan Fleming, Urban Fellow representing the office of Margaret Forgione, Commissioner of NYC DOT requested a letter of support for the installation of 12 bishop's crook lampposts between W. 145th and 149th Sts. on Convent Ave., 9

of which will be in the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District, these lampposts to replace the present cobra head types one for one. The luminaire will be the high pressure sodium type and when consideration of an alternative type was suggested, Mr. Fleming said that he would respond on this to Chantay Taylor, Co-Chair. [He has since responded that only this type is used for this lamppost across the city.] A letter of support was unanimously voted.

Ellen Baxter, Executive Director of Broadway Housing Communities, who has directed the restoration of the Benzinger House at Edgecombe Avenue and 150th St. and the Neville & Bagge apartment house at 583 Riverside Drive (at 135th St.), discussed the possibility of restoration of the former PS #186 for affordable housing and youth programs. On the basis of its great success in working with the New York Landmarks Conservancy in the historic restoration of the two buildings named above, Broadway Housing Communities has received a very large capital grant and this as well as historic preservation tax credits and affordable housing credits provide the means for serious exploration of possible restoration of PS #186 – whether in cooperation with the current listed owner, the M. & L. Wilson Boys Club, or, if they are no longer able to go forward, to shift ownership. Ms. Baxter concluded with the statement that it was not acceptable for the worthy but now disintegrating school building to lay vacant any longer.

There followed discussion of Committee action on landmark designation of the building. Ellen Baxter would like to see this happen and it was agreed that a resolution would be prepared. #186 is already on our 197-A landmark list.

Savona Bailey McClain raised the possibility of seeking a permit for a mobile food concession to be located at 140th St. by the playground in St. Nicholas Park. She will continue to explore this.

Carolyn Kent reported that the JMKaplan fund has awarded BARC, the dog run organizing group in Morningside Park, \$10,000 for installation of a retaining wall along the north/south 200' linear dimension of the run. They will present to us.

Short reports: 408 W. 145th will attend the C of A Hearing on 3/29; NYMTC will hold a meeting at St. Luke's AM Church Center on 3/30; Savona Bailey McClain reported on the well attended (even in a blizzard) presentation of the "Take me to the River" designs and enjoyable reception at the Hispanic Society of America.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Carolyn Kent*