

## Brief statement

### *Concerning the Forced Landmarking of West-Park Presbyterian Church*

On Tuesday, April 20th at 11 AM at City Hall, 1 Centre Street, in the 2nd Floor Council Chambers, the Landmarks Subcommittee of the Land Use Committee of City Council will hold the last public hearing on the forced landmarking of West-Park Presbyterian Church. The Landmarks Commission has already voted to designate West-Park as a landmark. All that remains is for City Council to support or not support the designation. Since Council member Brewer has supported, even pushed for this designation, and since Council members normally support the wishes of the Council member from the district of the designee, it will be extremely difficult to reverse the designation. Yet we must make every effort to do so. ***There are significant issues at stake for all in the faith community.***

Why do we oppose landmarking?

1. The issue here is *not* landmarking per se, it is *forced* landmarking, landmarking against the will and desire of the targeted congregation.
2. ***The issue is not esthetics.*** The beauty and historic significance of the West-Park building is not in dispute.
3. The primary issue is ***mission.*** Our buildings were constructed for the purposes of extending mission into the broader community.... the value of mission efforts by our congregations in terms of human services over the years is beyond calculation. ***The buildings were constructed as a means to an end, not an end in themselves.***
4. As inheritors of these buildings, we are the stewards not of ***buildings*** but of ***mission.*** ***It is our obligation to see that they continue to be used for that purpose.***
5. When the city imposes landmarking....without the resources to support or sustain the restoration and preservation of the building, it places an undue burden on the congregation. Indeed such actions can lead to the death of a congregation. ***Government should not have the right to take the life of a congregation to save a building.***
6. When Landmarks Commission members or preservation advocacy groups propose their own solutions for preserving the building, even stating, as some have, that a building should go into other hands who might be “better stewards”, ***it is in essence imposing its vision of mission onto a faith community in opposition to the deepest values of our constitution. It is our right to determine our own mission rooted in our spiritual beliefs and practices.***
7. Forced landmarking that has the effect of pushing the property into other hands is in essence ***confiscation.*** ***Once again...the issue is not esthetics, it is principle. Beauty cannot be separated from justice....esthetics without esthetics is cultural oppression...***

What can you do?

1. Show up Tuesday for the hearing. Wear collars or other appropriate religious clothing.

2. Be prepared to make a statement or have a statement written by you read by another person.
3. Contact your own council member to express your outrage and concern. (see below to find contact information.

<http://council.nyc.gov/html/members/members.shtml>

4. Call or e-mail Council member Brewer to express your outrage that the faith community has not also been respected as constituents of equal value to others...

[gab@pipeline.com](mailto:gab@pipeline.com)

917.881.3375 212.788.6975

Please send any prepared statement to Annie Rawlings at [socialwitness@presbynyc.org](mailto:socialwitness@presbynyc.org), as soon as possible....

For further information contact the Rev. Dr. Robert L. Brashear  
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