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Community Rallies to Save West Park Presbyterian Church from Landmarks Preservation Commission Wrecking Ball

Rally comes as LPC moves closer to de-designating the protected property to make way for luxury condos

NEW YORK, NY—The Center at West Park along with stars Mark Ruffalo, Amy Schumer, and Wendell Pierce, held a rally inside the West Park Presbyterian Church today ahead of Tuesday’s scheduled Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) hearing to determine the building’s fate.

LPC designated the church a landmark in 2010, calling it “one of the Upper West Side’s most important buildings.” But in 2022, the building’s owner asked LPC for permission to demolish it anyway claiming economic hardship. The owner, Presbyterian Church of New York City, prefers to sell the property to a high-end housing developer for more than \$30 million.

The building’s longtime tenant, [The Center at West Park](#), is a nonprofit organization that runs a multi-use arts facility and community hub. The building is also used as an active house of worship by the Lighthouse Chapel International and is home to a fully operating theater and performance space, the Pushkin Russian Theater Group, four artists in residence, free art programming for students, and affordable rental spaces for emerging artists.

The church is not falling down. The Center at West Park commissioned a structural analysis of the building by WJE Engineers & Architects in 2022 that revealed “the existing conditions observed were not inconsistent with buildings of similar age, materials, and climate.” Of the building owners’ structural analysis, WJE stated “the available reports and cost estimates reviewed by WJE recommend extensive structural, façade, and roofing repairs, sometimes in excess of those necessary to maintain the building in a safe and weather resistant condition.”

In April, Mayor Adams and LPC Chair Sarah Carroll [announced an action plan](#) “to aid in protecting buildings designated as historic landmarks that are at risk.” It reads in part: “While the risk of demolition or deconstruction of landmark designated buildings is very low, LPC and DOB worked together to analyze threats to these buildings and reviewed their policies and protocols to strengthen protections.”

Built in 1889, “the West Park Presbyterian Church is considered to be one of the best examples of a Romanesque Revival style religious structure in New York City,” according to LPC’s

preservation report. Its “monumental and distinguished presence... anchors an important intersection of the Upper West Side.”

The church has the strong support of Upper West Siders and preservationists.

“These landmarks and community centers are getting eaten up every day. We need to preserve them for our community,” said **actor and Upper West Side resident Mark Ruffalo**. “Its not only an active church where the community observes and worships —it’s a landmarked space for the arts, theatre, public assistance and a space for all of us to come together.”

“The Presbytery ignored this building for over a decade. LPC should not reward them with a \$30 million dollar payout for neglecting their property,” said **Council Member Gale A. Brewer**. “In April, LPC and Mayor Adams announced a new plan to save at-risk landmarked buildings. In June, they are ready to tear one down. To his credit, the mayor said in April that he believes in ‘protecting our most fragile landmark buildings,’ so I’m ready to see his plan in action. What we don’t need is another luxury condo building with no affordable housing.”

“I join with my fellow elected officials and community members to urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to deny the hardship application to release West Park Presbyterian Church building from its landmark status,” said **Congressman Jerry Nadler**. “The LPC unanimously approved the designation only 10 years ago and all financial avenues that could help steward the preservation of this Church have yet to be explored. The Church’s architectural significance, New York history, and current use as an arts and performance space is emblematic of Upper West Side’s unique character; to tear it down would do irreparable harm to this neighborhood.”

"The West Park Presbyterian Church is an iconic place of worship on the Upper West Side that is too valuable to demolish," said **State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal**. "As a hub of protest during the civil rights movement, as a haven for LGBTQ parishioners and AIDS activism, and as a home for the arts, West Park is the epitome of a community center. I join Debby Hirshman, Mark Ruffalo, Council Member Brewer, among many others, in calling on the Landmark Preservation Committee (LPC) to listen to the community and preserve this critical westside landmark. In its history, the LPC has abandoned 13 such landmarks to the wrecking ball — we cannot let West Park Church be the 14th."

“Greenlighting the demolition of a landmark church in order to build luxury condos during an affordable housing crisis would be an incredibly harmful move,” said **Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal** (D/WF -Manhattan), Chair of the Assembly Committee on Housing. “The case of the West Park Presbyterian Church is built on greed; I am dismayed at the Church’s decision to sell its tax-exempt property to the highest bidder, no matter the consequence. With a community non-profit standing at the ready to assume the space and expand much-needed programming, I urge the City to reject this demolition application.”

“The commission has taken an exceedingly friendly attitude toward developers in recent years,” said **Upper West Sider and former Landmarks Commissioner Roberta Gratz**, who led the 20-year, \$20 million restoration of Eldridge Street Synagogue starting in the 1980s. “I wish Eldridge had been in as good of condition as West Park when we started. There is reason for alarm over the effort to de-designate West Park. Several designated buildings in Greenwich Village, the Upper East Side and Harlem have been demolished due to collusion and neglect.”