



# NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney  
Chairman

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## COMMISSION APPROVES THE EXPANSION OF THE BEDFORD-STUYVESANT/STUYVESANT HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICT

*Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant/Stuyvesant Heights Historic District, One of the Nation's Largest African and Caribbean-American Communities, Absorbs 825 More Buildings*



The Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to approve the expansion of the **Bedford-Stuyvesant/Stuyvesant Heights Historic District** in Brooklyn by 825 buildings, tripling the size of the existing district. The approval brings to more than 31,000 the total number of properties throughout the City that have received landmark protection since the

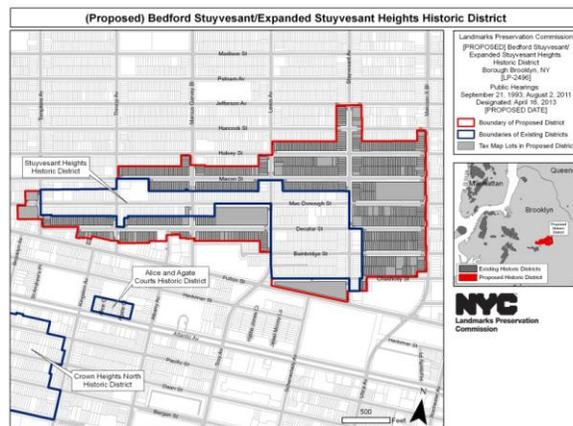
Commission was founded in 1965.

“The historic district extension speaks not only to Bedford-Stuyvesant’s rich architectural diversity but also to its extraordinary social and cultural diversity and deserves to be protected for present and future generations,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney.

In other business, the Commission voted unanimously to hold a public hearing on a proposal to landmark the **Holland Plaza Building**, a large, modern classical style manufacturing building facing the entrance to the Holland Tunnel in Lower Manhattan. Located at 73 Varick St. and completed in 1930, the building was designed by the celebrated architect Ely Jacques Kahn. A date for the public hearing was not immediately scheduled.

### Bedford-Stuyvesant/Expanded Stuyvesant Heights Historic District

The expanded district, consisting of approximately 825 architecturally diverse row houses, two-family residences, small apartment houses and institutional buildings mostly constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, is bounded by Tompkins Avenue to the west, Macon and Halsey streets to the north, Malcolm X Boulevard to the east and Fulton Street to the south and encompasses two city parks (as well as the



existing 430-building Bedford-Stuyvesant/Stuyvesant Heights Historic District, approved by the Commission in 1971). The Commission held its first public hearing on a proposal to expand the district in 1993, and a second one in 2011, following extensive outreach to residents, community groups and elected officials.

“We finally crossed the finish line today, thanks to a great deal of work by the residents, homeowners and leaders of this community,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. “We look forward to our continued partnership with them to protect the extraordinary streetscapes of their neighborhood, one of the most renowned in New York City.”

The expanded district is located in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, which was originally settled by the Dutch in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and became one of the largest and best-known African-American and Caribbean-American residential communities in the United States during

the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most intense period of construction in the extended district, fueled by transportation improvements, occurred between 1895 and 1900, although some of the buildings were built before or after that time.



The extension also includes several churches, such as the stone-faced **Bethany Baptist Church** at 141-147 Decatur St. (at left, originally the Herkimer Street Baptist Church, it was completed in 1888 and designed in the Gothic Revival style by A.V. Porter); the Stuyvesant Heights Christian Church at 61-73 Mac Donough St. (originally the Tompkins Avenue Congregational Church, it was completed in 1877)

and a City park (Fulton Park, completed in 1910, is bounded by Fulton, Stuyvesant Avenue and Chauncey Street) and two public playgrounds (Decatur Playground, completed in 1941 and is located on Chauncey Street between Lewis and Stuyvesant avenues) and El Shabazz Playground (completed in 1963 on Mac Donough Street between Malcolm X Boulevard and Stuyvesant Avenue).

The earliest buildings in the expanded district date to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and include a number of vernacular wood-frame houses, including **316 Decatur St.** (at right), as well as wood-frame row



houses. The 1880s and 1890s brought the development of speculatively built houses designed in the popular architectural styles of the era: neo-Grec, Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival. Other styles later followed, such as the Colonial Revival style (372 Lewis Avenue, designed by W.T. McCarthy and completed in 1914) and the Chateausque style, derived from the chateaux of 16<sup>th</sup>-century France and combining Gothic and early Renaissance elements. This rare style is best reflected in an apartment house at **79-81 Decatur St.** (at left) that was completed



in 1891 and designed by the prominent Brooklyn architect Montrose Morris. The building features a turreted mansard roof with wall dormers and finials.



Also represented are the Beaux-Arts style (**Macon Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library** at 361-371 Lewis Ave., completed in 1907 and designed by Walker & Morris, at left), Mediterranean Revival style (the comfort station in Fulton Park, completed in 1908 and designed by Helmle & Huberty), Arts and Crafts style (339 Macon St., completed in 1921 and designed by Peter Millman) and the Utilitarian style, which is closely related to the streamlined Art Moderne style (a two-story commercial

building at 485-487 Tompkins Ave., altered in 1950).

In addition to the long blocks of intact low-scale buildings, the expanded district is distinctive for the iron newel posts, railings, fences and window grilles that enhance the cohesiveness of its streetscapes (278 to 290 Macon St., right).



Bedford-Stuyvesant's population in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries consisted mostly of former New Englanders and immigrants from Ireland and Germany. The neighborhood started to attract large numbers of Caribbean immigrants and African-Americans in the 1930s, and by 1950 was known as "Brooklyn's Harlem."

By the 1960s, a citywide economic downturn, discriminatory banking policies, an influx of absentee landlords and political corruption, among other factors, took a toll on Bedford-Stuyvesant and many other neighborhoods in New York City, and led to the abandonment of thousands of properties. The Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, the nation's first and largest community development corporation, was formed in 1967 to create jobs, rehabilitate existing housing and construct new residential buildings. This effort, combined with the subsequent formation of public-private partnerships and investment by individual home and business owners, has brought renewed stability the historic neighborhood.

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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 31,000 buildings and sites, including 1,323 individual landmarks, 115 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 109 historic districts and 19 historic district extensions in all five boroughs. Under the City's landmarks law, considered among the most powerful in the nation, the Commission must be comprised of at least three architects, a historian, a realtor, a planner or landscape architect, as well as a representative of each borough.

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