

## **LANDMARK WEST!**

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**From:** "LANDMARK WEST!" <landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 14, 2004 12:29 PM  
**Subject:** Make Your Voice Heard: Tell The City Council That Landmarks Matter!

### **Make Your Voice Heard: Tell The City Council That Landmarks Matter!**

Three former Landmarks Commissioners (including two former Chairs) have written to Mayor Bloomberg and current Landmarks Chair Robert B. Tierney to urge a public hearing for 2 Columbus Circle. The response: **SILENCE.**

The time has come to hold the Mayor and Landmarks Commission accountable for their failure to act on 2 Columbus Circle and other worthy sites that need their protection. **On Wednesday, October 20th at 3:00 PM**, thanks to the leadership of Council Members Simcha Felder and Bill Perkins, the NY City Council will hold a special oversight hearing on the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). The hearing will be held in the **14th Floor Hearing Room at 250 Broadway** which is across the street from City Hall Park. Your presence and support is vital!

We need your help to tell the Council that:

\* 2 Columbus Circle deserves a public hearing before the LPC. In the words of NYT architecture critic Herbert Muschamp, the failure of the LPC to hold a hearing "raises the scary question of what other buildings the commission might choose to overlook in the future."

\*The LPC needs increased funding and more staff to do its job. The agency's budget (now a miniscule \$3.2 million) has been repeatedly diminished even as its workload has increased exponentially, undermining its ability to identify and protect historic resources.

\* The LPC process must be transparent, open and responsive to public participation. Communities deserve full and equal stature in shaping the future of their neighborhoods.

The last Council oversight hearing on the landmarks process was in the 1990s. There has **never** been a public landmarks hearing for 2 Columbus Circle. Now is our chance! A strong showing of support is critical. We must have a full room, with voices from all boroughs to drive home the point that preservation matters to all New Yorkers. Please consider testifying or simply attending the hearing. Your presence speaks volumes. **Please inform us if you plan to attend!**

Keep in mind that there is a three-minute time limit for individual testimony and plan to bring at least 10 copies of your written testimony. While there is no substitute for your presence at the public hearing, if you absolutely cannot attend, **please send copies of your testimony to us at [landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org](mailto:landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org)**. We will make sure that it's delivered into the right hands.

See you Wednesday! Contact us with any questions: 212-496-8110 or [landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org](mailto:landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org).

**LANDMARK WEST!**

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**From:** "LANDMARK WEST!" <landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 20, 2004 9:08 AM  
**Subject:** TODAY: Special City Council Hearing on the Landmarks Preservation Commission

\*\*\*COME SUPPORT 2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE AND LANDMARKS PRESERVATION!\*\*\*

**Today, Wednesday, October 20th at 3:00 PM**, the NY City Council will hold a special oversight hearing on the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). The hearing will be held in the **14th Floor Hearing Room at 250 Broadway** which is across the street from City Hall Park. **Your presence and support is vital!**

Author **Tom Wolfe** will testify, almost exactly a year after his scathing two-part *NY Times* Op-Ed piece offering his take on why the LPC has failed to schedule a public hearing for **2 Columbus Circle**: "[E]verytime the question of a hearing on 2 Columbus Circle came up, the landmarks commissioners, as I see it, dove under their desks, clapped their hands over their ears, cried out to their secretaries to shove history and the concept of landmarks preservation itself through the shredder, and hid."

Mr. Wolfe will also join us for a **press conference starting at 1:30 PM on the steps of City Hall** to highlight 2 Columbus Circle as a prime example of the LPC's murky process for deciding which buildings deserve hearings. **NY City Council Member Bill Perkins** will address this issue as it relates to still largely unprotected historic resources in Harlem, including St. Thomas, The Apostle Church. Please let us know if you are able to attend! Remember, in unity (and numbers!) there's strength.

Lapses like 2 Columbus Circle and St. Thomas Church don't happen in a vacuum. They are symptomatic of much deeper, systemic problems that, unchecked, will continue to undermine our Landmarks process. While this oversight hearing is no substitute for a true designation hearing for 2 Columbus Circle (or St. Thomas, or the proposed Douglaston Hill Historic District in Queens...the list goes on), **YOU** can help ensure that our message gets out loud and clear - **NEW YORKERS DESERVE AN OPEN, DEMOCRATIC, AND RESPONSIVE LANDMARKS PROCESS!**

If you cannot attend this hearing, please send copies of your testimony to us at [landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org](mailto:landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org) or 212-875-0209 (fax). We will make sure that it's delivered into the right hands.

## **LANDMARK WEST!**

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**From:** "LANDMARK WEST!" <landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 21, 2004 4:57 PM  
**Subject:** Update: City Council Hearing on Landmarks Commission

### **City Council Hearing on Landmarks Evokes Passion and Substance**

(For *Daily News* coverage, go to <http://www.nydailynews.com/10-21-2004/business/story/244324p-209375c.html> or scroll down to the bottom of this message.)

Hundreds of preservationists attempted to participate in yesterday's **City Council oversight hearing on the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)**, which was held in a small room on the 16th floor of an office building (rather than at City Hall). People lined the walls, spilled out the door, were herded into a cafeteria next to the hearing room (where they could neither see nor hear the proceedings), and waited for admission on a line that snaked through the building's lobby. Many who came to deliver testimony were turned away at the front desk.

Those who did make it into the hearing room witnessed an outpouring of both passion and substance. The hearing began more than half an hour late at 3:30 PM and was (inexplicably) adjourned at 5:30 PM, leaving time for only brief public testimony. But one speaker in particular, **Former LPC Commissioner Anthony M. Tung**, spoke for the majority when he cited "**serious failures in the performance of [the LPC].**" "These are long-standing problems, some growing worse in recent years, and to which neither the commission nor the mayor's office has responded." (See his full statement below.)

Other speakers included **Tom Wolfe, former LPC Chair Beverly Moss Spatt, former Council Member Ronnie Eldridge, and former Art Commission President Whitney North Seymour, Jr.**, all of whom reiterated that something is clearly wrong with the Landmarks process as it is implemented. Unfortunately, current LPC Chair Robert B. Tierney was not present to hear public testimony - he departed after delivering his own statement.

The Chair of the Council's Landmarks Subcommittee, Council Member Simcha Felder, who scheduled the hearing, expressed surprise that so many people took an interest in the administrative procedures of the LPC. He promised to hold a second hearing to take additional public testimony. **But time is of the essence!** Please write to Chair Felder ([felder@council.nyc.ny.us](mailto:felder@council.nyc.ny.us)) - especially if you tried to attend, but were not admitted - and let him know of your interest in participating in a second hearing. Also, please copy [landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org](mailto:landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org) so that we know you were there! We'll keep you posted on future dates...

### **OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES OF THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION**

#### **Testimony before the Committee on Landmarks of the New York City Council**

**20 October 2004**

Honorable Members of the Council,  
 My name is Anthony M. Tung and I live at 36 Cooper Square in Manhattan. I am a former member of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (serving as a Commissioner from 1978 to 1988), and author of *Preserving the World's Great Cities*-a study of conservation practice in 18 cities across the globe.

The report before you today sponsored by the Women's City Club: "The Landmarks Preservation Commission: Issues of Concern" is a thoughtful and measured document-an indicator of serious failures in the performance of that agency.

I have four brief comments relative to this matter:

1. Of all the groups in the city, the authors of this report, the grass-roots citizen preservationists, are the people who monitor the commission's work most thoroughly: attending every public meeting and checking the built results in the field in regard to thousands of applications every year. No other constituency knows the work of the

commission as well.

2. None of the "Issues of Concern" listed in their document are new-these are long-standing problems, some growing worse in recent years, and to which neither the commission nor the mayor's office has responded.
3. Some of this behavior-including backdoor negotiations with developers and property owners; failure to schedule revised Certificate of Appropriateness applications for public review; capricious exercise of standards in regard to designations; an inadequate hearing room sound system so that the public cannot listen to the commission's discussions-demonstrates an institutionalized lack of transparency and fairness in the public process and an attitude of contempt in the agency's interaction with citizen groups.
4. Given the deaf ear of the commission and the mayor's office, the only people capable of correcting such misconduct are you, this committee. Which I thank for holding this hearing. And which I hope will now schedule further hearings to insure that the Landmarks Commission remedies these abuses. Saving the landmarks and historic districts of our city requires the support of involved residents to monitor the 23,000 properties which constitute the heritage of New York. Without these people, we can't know whether historic preservation is achieved on the ground, in reality, out in the cityscape. We are blind without their well-informed eyes.

Today, these citizen-stewards are being barred in numerous improper ways from a process which the Council in its wisdom designed to be open and participatory. Please help them regain the fair legal access you intended.

### **Landmarking's blasted Lollipop, Harlem in jeopardy**

By LORE CROGHAN  
DAILY NEWS BUSINESS WRITER

Author Tom Wolfe wants New Yorkers to know the city Landmarks Preservation Commission is a bunch of spineless bureaucrats - and he held a press conference yesterday to say so. Then he went in to tell the City Council.

Wolfe lampooned the commission's refusal to consider the Lollipop building at 2 Columbus Circle for landmark protection. He said the city - which is selling the building - has given the word to the commission to pretend the property's invisible.

And he's only one of many who think the commission has become a tool of big money and big developers - from midtown to mid-Harlem.

"When anyone asks about 2 Columbus Circle, the commissioners dive under their desks," the author of "The Bonfire of the Vanities" said on the steps of City Hall, dressed in his signature white suit, with a navy-blue cape to ward off the chill. Manhattan's borough board voted to sell Lollipop to the Museum of Arts & Design, which plans to remove the facade.

Throughout its 40-year history, the building has been fiercely derided by critics for its odd look. Others defend it with equal ferocity.

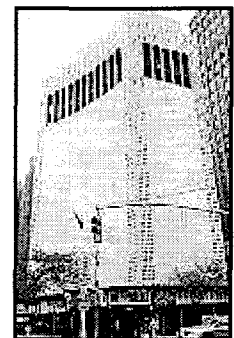
Yesterday, Landmarks Commission chairman Bob Tierney defended the agency without singling out any property.

"I've never seen a more committed, skilled group of people in government in my life," Tierney told the City Council.



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**Author Wolfe says  
Landmarks  
Commission ...**



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**... should protect  
Lollipop building.**

But Wolfe has been campaigning to save 2 Columbus Circle. He told the Daily News that driving his efforts is his admiration for the building's architect, Edward Durell Stone - who defied architectural trends of his day.

"Stone was trying to show a way out of Modernism - which was so constipated," said Wolfe, whose latest novel, "I Am Charlotte Simmons," comes out in three weeks.

The hearing - held by the council's landmarks subcommittee - drew an overflow crowd of angry preservationists. About 50 were allowed to stay in the hearing room at 250 Broadway. The rest were sent to a nearby cafeteria to wait.

When Councilwoman Margarita Lopez (D-Manhattan) arrived, 100 people were already in the building lobby, waiting to be allowed upstairs. "Obviously, the number of people who are here indicates there is a problem with landmarking," she said.

Subcommittee chairman Simcha Felder (D-Brooklyn) warned that the testimony could only be about the administrative practices of the landmarks commission - which is short-staffed and gets 200 landmarking applications each year. But even fellow council members such as Bill Perkins (D-Manhattan) aired their specific concerns anyway.

"Harlem is a community going through a lot of changes - maybe the whole district is a landmark," said Perkins. "We don't want there to be a wholesale bulldozing of property - like St. Thomas."

A famous church in the neighborhood, St. Thomas the Apostle, is slated for demolition - and has never had a landmarks hearing.

**Originally published on October 20, 2004**