INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

The Reminiscences of

Ed Kirkland

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Ed Kirkland conducted by Interviewers Eddie Nelms, Lisa Ackerman, and Vicki Weiner on November 3, 2004. This interview is part of the New York Preservation Archive's Project's collection of individual oral history interviews.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The views expressed in this oral history interview do not necessarily reflect the views of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

This is a transcript of a "Sages and Stages" forum sponsored by NYPAP in November 2004. The featured speaker is Ed Kirkland, a longtime citizen-activist in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. Kirkland helped lead a committee of his local community board to develop a 197(a) plan (named after the section of the city charter that authorizes such plans) and rezoning proposal to protect Chelsea's historical low-rise character. After many years of building support, Kirkland and his neighbors were successful in winning official sanction for their proposals, and the city adopted the plan in 1996 and related downzoning in 1999. In this transcript, Kirkland describes how he became concerned about the loss of Chelsea's neighborhood character and subsequently became involved in the community board's efforts to create a plan. He then details the lengthy process of building political support for the plan and rezoning. Kirkland also discusses the relationship between the landmarked Chelsea Historic District and the community plan, which covers a larger area than the landmark district and is intended to preserve the character of areas that are not landmarked. Much of the latter part of the discussion focuses on the compromises that often must be made to secure plan adoption and the challenges of influencing the city to effectuate an adopted plan.

Edward Kirkland moved to Chelsea in the early 1960s. Still a resident today, he has been one of the neighborhood's staunchest preservation advocates since his arrival almost six decades ago. As longtime chairman of Community Board 4's Chelsea Preservation and Planning Committee, Kirkland led the fight to rezone—and downzone—Chelsea in the process of creating the Chelsea Historic District, working to preserve the low-rise, row house-oriented character of the neighborhood. Outside of his ongoing preservation battles in Chelsea, Kirkland also in part inspired the Friends of the High Line campaign to save and redevelop the old elevated railroad tracks. He has been a member of CB4 for thirty-plus years, only recently stepping down from his post. Kirkland has been honored as a Historic Districts Council Landmarks Lion.

Transcriptionist: Unknown

Session: 1

Interviewee: Ed Kirkland

Location: Unknown

Interviewer: Eddie Nelms (Q1), Lisa Ackerman (Q2), Vicki Weiner (Q3)

Date: November 3, 2004

Q3: I just want to get us started. Welcome to everyone. Thank you for coming this afternoon. My name is Vicki Weiner. I'm the Treasurer of the New York Preservation Archive Project [NYPAP], and I want to welcome you on behalf of NYPAP—which is what we call it—and the Neighborhood Preservation Center, which got together to sponsor the series that you are now part of. Many of you have been to the earlier sessions that we held in the past two weeks.

I also want to thank our funders for this project. The [Samuel H.] Kress Foundation, and the New York State Council on the Arts both contributed to the launching and implementation of the series. As many of you have heard, as you have been at previous sessions, but I'll repeat for the newcomers—the Archive Project is really focused on looking at the history of preservation in New York, and making sure that this, itself, is preserved. We tend to be very good at accessing tools for preserving buildings, but we haven't been so good at preserving our own story, as a field, a movement, and a profession. So that's a lot of what the New York Preservation Archive Project is about.

This series was really launched as an effort to do a few things. First, we wanted to invite in some of the preservation pioneers of our city, such as Mr. [Edward “Ed”] Kirkland, and make sure the stories of their preservation activities were documented—which is why you have Richard [George] in the back, with the camera. We're tape-recording this session. Second, we wanted to

engage some of the emerging leaders in the field of preservation—many of you in the audience, and our interviewer today, Eddie Nelms—to start to think about these past stories of preservation, view them as resources, and think about what they mean to us today. Third, we really wanted to look at the things that happened in the past, and to see if there are any lessons for our work in the future of historic preservation.

So that's the theory. There's one more session next week, which we hope you'll come to. I would like to turn the floor over to Lisa Ackerman, who's going to frame our discussion today—which is about preservation and planning. Lisa is the Secretary of the Archive Project, which I just learned by reading the letterhead *[laughs]*. Lisa's been such a great supporter and participant in NYPAP. She also, as many of you know, the Vice President of the Kress Foundation, and also a master's degree candidate in historic preservation at the Pratt Institute. Some of her fellow students are here today.

Q2: I was also just going to say that I'm also on the steering committee for the Neighborhood Preservation Center, too. What an incestuous group this is *[laughs]*. I'm actually going to turn it over fairly quickly to Eddie and Ed, but I just wanted to say a few things. One is, the theme that's emerging is that our sages all profess to be "accidental" preservationists. They had no idea this was where they were headed, and now they've been labeled preservationists. They claim through none of their own effort did they set out to be preservationists. Also, in some of the discussions that have ensued, I just wanted to point out one thing.

When we were talking last week about advocacy, and Jack Taylor mentioned what he thought the effects of the professionalization of the field had been. This is still a very young field in terms of it being an academic discipline and sort of studied in that way. In the '60s, when the Columbia [University] program [Historic Preservation Program] started, it was really a very new effort. But it also paralleled the fine-arts conservation movement, where NYU's [New York University] program for people interested in painting and sculpture conservation came into being at the same time. There was definitely a movement across the board to find ways for people to study these fields more actively, and to develop a set of criteria by which we looked at both our built and artistic heritage. That's also, I think, what we're hoping to capture in here. The kind of continuum of the people in the field and how we all plug in.

I am going to just say a few brief things—because there's actually some biographical information that's been passed out. Ed Kirkland is an active member of Community Board 4—

Kirkland: —and I have to go to the meeting at 6:30 P.M. *[laughs]*.

Q2: —and the chair of the [Community Board 4's] Chelsea Preservation & Planning Committee. He was active in the creation of the 197-a plan for Chelsea, and has been honored by the Historic Districts Council [HDC] as a Landmarks Lion.

Ed [Eddie] Nelms is currently working at the Times Square Alliance, and has an undergraduate degree in architecture from the University of Virginia, a master's degree in preservation and planning from Columbia [University], and worked at the Municipal Arts Society [MAS] as an

urban planning fellow. Just to point out that this is a topic about which he is passionate, his thesis was “Historic Preservation & Community Planning: An Examination of New York City's Experience.” The question he sought to answer is, "Are community-generated 197-a plans lacking recommendations that support historic preservation, and could these plans be effective planning tools for furthering historic preservation recommendations?"

With that, I'm actually going to turn it over to Eddie, with three quick questions, and then we're going to get on to Ed's story about Chelsea.

One is, can you quickly tell us what a 197-a plan is? Can you tell us how it is that, in the course of your academic studies, you came to seek out Ed Kirkland? Then, very briefly, what does the Times Square Alliance do?

Q1: All right *[laughs]*. I think I can handle that.

The 197-a plan is essentially, for the lack of a better way of explaining it, is any plan that is developed in New York City by any community board, any city agency. One of the biggest misconceptions of a 197-a plan is that they are sort of this special plan that is oftentimes developed by community boards, or by city agencies, or the borough board. But, in reality, they very much are just plans. According to Section 197A of the [New York] City Charter, this provision essentially gave these entities the opportunity to develop plans. They’re often land-use plans, but they can oftentimes be very much focused on other issues, such as environmental justice, transportation, housing. Many of the plans in the last ten or fifteen years have really

focused on comprehensive planning, looking at all the issues. Most of them have oftentimes been drafted by community boards. In New York City we normally think of 197-a plans as plans that come from community boards. That have a major public and private involvement, private being an individual resident in the community working with city agencies to make the plans happen.

The second question was—what is the Times Square Alliance?

Q2: No, let's do the Times Square Alliance, and then we'll get to—

Q1: The Times Square Alliance is one of several Business Improvement Districts [BID] in New York City. We just recently changed our name to the Times Square Alliance from the Times Square BID. We are the third largest Business Improvement District in the city. We have about a $10 million budget. Basically, the responsibilities of Business Improvement Districts are to maintain sanitation and safety in a geographic area. In Times Square, things have changed drastically over the last twenty years. Safety and sanitation are no longer the primary issues we focus on, although they are the bread and butter. We have recently branched out into doing some work in innovative programs, I like to say, such as public art, more design projects, preservation projects. Really working to bring awareness to Times Square's sort of iconic character, which has sort of gotten lost, and what New Yorkers seem to miss most about Times Square. They miss the sort of dirty, gritty streets, the pornographic component.

Audience Member: Bring back the "peep."

Q1: Exactly. But, delicately, we've taken on this mission to help rejuvenate that *[laughter]*. I'm sure Tim [Tompkins] would have wanted me to say that *[laughter]*. He has basically chartered us to do that.

How I came to know Ed Kirkland was through Dorothy Miner. In drafting my thesis—and Dorothy was my thesis advisor, in fact—she suggested to get personal comments and interviews from Ed Kirkland. So that's how I came to know you. I think we can begin at that point.

My first question really is, to you, Ed, how did you begin this process of—beginning first actually, I want to step back a little further. How did you get involved with Community Board 4? What was the impetus for you getting on the Community Board, and look at preservation as an issue?

Kirkland: I suppose it was that I was concerned with what was happening with Chelsea. I mean, my only experience with preservation was the fact that when I was, shall we say, underemployed. Just at the time when the Landmarks [Preservation] Commission [LPC] held its first hearings. I went to the very first hearings of the Landmarks Commission, and I was the only spectator at the first hardship hearing. In fact, they were so surprised to see me that they asked me if I had something to say *[laughter]*. Otherwise, except for a general background, I was not particularly involved in preservation, and, actually, the Chelsea Historic District was founded about the time. Chelsea and the extension, which is almost as big as the original district, occurred just about the time I was becoming aware and active in the community. I didn't really have any part in it.

After that I knew the people who had done it, and I became aware. I saw that the Chelsea Historic District was there, but we had streets just outside the Chelsea Historic District that people were building big buildings on. Buildings that just didn't work there. I got worried about that. Other people were worried about preserving, actually, the character of Chelsea, in different ways. So a committee was formed on the Community Board—I was not on the Community Board—called the Chelsea Preservation & Planning Committee, by a man, actually, whose grandfather had been a saddler in West Chelsea, and he'd gone into his shop. He had this romantic idea of manufacturing in West Chelsea. He saw it disappearing, as were most of the manufacturing areas in Manhattan and much of the city. He wanted to wait—that's why he was really trying to find a way of preserving that.

I got on this committee, first as a public member, because I was not yet a member of the Community Board. Any member of the community can become a member of a committee. Then I applied to get on the Community Board, because I was really concerned about this issue. I realized I knew enough about preservation and planning that for most of Chelsea—it was too late for a historic district like in Greenwich Village to exist, in which the avenues are quite different in character from the side streets, are part of the whole district. This was not very likely. There was were some areas in Chelsea, obviously, that had character, that had scale, but essentially were not designatable.

I went at this, and the other people were interested in this particular idea because they realized that manufacturing was going. The head of the committee, a fellow called Ed Jones—I don't

know why everybody involved in this is called Ed *[laughter]*. Ed Jones, we were talking and he sent out—I suppose nowadays you'd call it an RSEI [RFEI], Request for Expressions of Interest—to all the planning colleges in the city, saying, "Could you help us with this problem?" One department responded and that was Columbia [University]. Elliott Sclar and Saskia Sassen were interested. Saskia was interested in the preservation of manufacturing, and Elliott Sclar had been interviewed by Michael Cortla [ph], of Columbia, and got interested in the 197-a. Which he suddenly found, leafing through the charter—or at least this is the story. He suddenly realized it was there. You can tell me whether that story is true or not. He got Elliot interested in it.

That's how I got into the business. There was a studio, and I remember Elliott giving me this huge map of Chelsea, saying, "What do you think Chelsea should be zoned at?" I literally had no idea, so I just put it back in my closet, where I found it some years later, and told him, "I think we should have something called contextual zoning." I didn't know much about it, because it had just been invented at that time.

I went around, I got interested in contextual zoning and when it was being expanded from its original Upper West Side. I followed Sandy Hornick all over town, as he was explaining contextual zoning and raising complaints about it. He explained very patiently to me many times why it was the way it was, from the city planning point of view. I acquired some knowledge of it. A few of us on the committee got together and essentially, we decided—I persuaded them that we should form a 197-a plan—I think more than anybody else—and that it should be focused on preservation. Keeping the scale of the area. I didn't know enough about zoning, really, to do it yet, but we got a little money from the then-council-member, Carol Greitzer, who found it so

difficult to get money that she said, "Never ask me for money again!" That's why, perhaps, she didn't stay a council member very long. We hired Elliot, and he and one of his assistants actually did this contextual zoning. We set out the general outline. By that time I knew enough, and I set a general line of the kind of thing we should add here and there. She looked at the student data, which is lost—and set out a plan—which, now that I realize it, I wish it had been a little different. But it was fundamentally good. We pulled ourselves together, and tried to present it to [New York City Department of] City Planning.

They didn't know how to deal with a 197-a plan. They'd never had a real community board, 197-a plan before, so we had difficulty getting it through City Planning intake. Finally, someone took it—and I'm told he was eventually scolded for taking it *[laughter]*. We got it in there, and there was this long, long silence, very long silence. Then, suddenly, he received a request for what now would be called EAS [Environmental Assessment Statement], then called the PDS [Project Data Statement]. For all the forty blocks of Chelsea that were involved. Obviously, as City Planning knew very well, it was far beyond the capacity of a community board.

Well, then we did things that I think are essential to the process. First, we began and it was under the leadership of Tom [Thomas] Duane, who was then the chairman of the committee. I was the chairman of the sub-committee that drew up the plan. He was great at publicity. He got money from somewhere. We did a video, we sold the whole thing around the community. We did a slideshow around the community and got their support. Then we got the elected officials' support, because the community was behind it—all the articulate community was behind it—and we got the elected officials. Then we had a meeting down there with Sylvia Deutsch, in what's

now 22 Reade Street—in the hearing room there, with Sylvia Deutsch. She was very hostile, but eventually she agreed to look at the plan and agreement, but she completely—we had several goals. They can be elaborated, but they were essentially to preserve the character of Chelsea and the historic district, to slow down the displacement of both residents and businesses. Because, we said ourselves, there's no way you can keep them there forever, but if the buildings are torn down they're sure to be going. If we reduce the temptation to tear them down, because the replacements won't be much bigger, there is a chance of their staying there. We went to the housing people to get more allies.

We got this alliance, went to Sylvia, and she agreed to look at contextual zoning. Because we had been disappointed—I have to go back a little. When we first appointed City Planning, it was the old, old *[unclear]*, "We will downzone your side streets, if we upzone the avenues." We said, "This is just all wrong, because the building is taking place on the avenues and the side streets. It'll cut up the community, the way you could already see the Upper East Side being cut up." There was an Upper East Side. It was an ethnic Upper East Side. Yorkville—there was a Hungarian Yorkville, there was a Bohemian, a Czech Yorkville, there was a German Yorkville. Nothing is left of those places now except the churches. That's what we didn't want in Chelsea. We wanted to preserve the character of the community.

She accepted that idea—what we thought of as a a more or less innovative idea—of contextual zoning, not block by block but over a whole community, and reflect the scale of the whole community. Building up from the West End and Tenth Avenue, which is the old waterfront, up to, essentially, the spine of Manhattan. Where the loft buildings are in the Ladies' Mile [Historic

District]. But Sylvia would not listen to the affordable housing. Because we had the same kind of thing—mandable [ph], affordable housing if you build residential on vacant lots and the taxpayers' parking garages and so on, in the manufacturing zone of East Chelsea. Now, but if you have 30%, we're willing to compromise on the numbers for affordable housing.

She wouldn't listen to this at all. We had a hard time on the streets and avenues but we might have gotten there. I've always wondered whether we might have done better, but anyhow, we didn't get anywhere. Things stink, things change, and things sort of simmered around, because we didn't know enough to keep things going too well. I didn't have the—we were naive. We were incredibly naive. None of us had ever been serious community activists before. We didn't know the buttons to press. I talked to a couple of planning people—departments—who had heard about us, etc., but we didn't get anywhere. Until actually, Ruth Messinger came in as Borough President. She really revived us. She really got us interested in working again, providing the data for City Planning, and we got somebody else interested at the same time. We got Orenstein, Fred Orenstein, who was the minority leader of the [New York State] Senate, and a very influential man. He was very much interested in charter revision. Lo and behold, one of the people he hired for charter revision was one of the community assistants on Community Board 4, who had been involved in making the plan.

So guess what? The 197-a plan was given teeth, in the charter revision of 1961. Was it '61? No, it was sometime later. It was the zoning of '61—which was thought of as protective at the time, but didn't work. We got the teeth in the 197-a plan, and by luck—we just lucked in here, because Fred Orenstein was one of the people who had badgered Sylvia Deutsch into a plan. He'd been

frustrated, too. So people—people you never know—and the right moment. These are two of the most important things. Get community support, get elected support, and if you get the right individuals—we did it all by chance, but you can often find them. These are very useful things in planning, as in preservation, but they're everywhere. Knowing someone is the real question. So she pushed us, she got us running, and she got the things—the plan in place, a little more publicity. Then we got a very activist board chair who pushed me along. Then Joe Rose became head of City Planning. Knowing people. Sheer luck.

Joe [Joseph B.] Rose, who was then head of City Planning, had been the head of the Planning Committee, the Planning & Zoning Committee of Community Board 5, next to us. Since the Chelsea Plan affected the avenues that separated us from Board 5, I had gone to the Board 5 Land Use Committee, and asked for support. Joe said, "We'll give you general support," and he assigned the thing to somebody to go into this. As far as I know they never went any further, but apparently he did write the letter. He lived very near Chelsea, by the way, or what we thought of as Chelsea, but he didn't think of it—just east of Sixth Avenue. So he was sympathetic. He'd almost committed himself to it. It was something that he could do for the community. It was something he could do, so he did it. But, of course, he hated Ruth Messinger *[laughter]*. So politically, Ruth had to stay in the background. She was furious, but she accepted it. She was willing enough to get across that she didn't make an issue of it. We went through a negotiation with City Planning. We could have been tougher, but we were still relatively naive, as we had been. Eventually we got the 197-a plan through.

But then what happened—the 197-a plan is just a matter of principles. You establish these

principles, but you don't change a damn thing. Then we had to go through a rezoning, the Chelsea rezoning. We had three years while everybody tried to get the data in shape, and there were a lot of other things that were higher priority for City Planning. People became aware of it. Chelsea was beginning to get gentrified, a new ethnic element had come in which were known as the yuppies, and the first stages were occurring. Buildings began to appear, and they rushed against the Chelsea rezoning. Several of the vacant sites that we had been terrified about were built on—some of them quite inappropriately. Some of them were in the historic district, so that the Landmarks Commission was able to get them down. Then we got the Chelsea rezoning in '99, and we've had it for five years, and it's worked pretty well. Even the parts that City Planning upzoned, except right near the waterfront—which is our next battle. We're going to be certified, and, actually, since we stopped at Tenth Avenue—we were told to—and we didn't want to touch it because it was the waterfront, and who knew what was going to happen there? Now that is the battleground. Whether the principles of the Chelsea Plan will be lost in West Chelsea, as I'm afraid they will, is our great problem.

Q1: I have numerous questions after that story. The first is, can you give us, for starters, a timeline as to how long this plan took to develop—from when you began working on it in the committee, and then went into zoning. Just hitting the milestone points.

Kirkland: The plan in the studio was—I should remember. It was around '80, I think.

Q1: It was a little later than 1980.

Kirkland: All this has receded into the murk. Anyhow, first we did the studio—

Q2: ‘85.

Kirkland: ’85 . Thank you. I have to scramble every time I'm looking for these dates. But, anyhow, the studio was in '85. We had started looking at it maybe two years before that. The studio was in '85, then the plan itself was, I think, about '86 or '87, when it was actually submitted to City Planning. Then, you see, the actual adoption plan wasn't until '96. I always think of it as ten years, just to get the plan. It was almost that.

I'll tell you one thing. We were told that a plan should be a simple, land-use plan. In those days, the original idea of City Planning, if they were going to do something for land-use, or so they'd say—a 197-a plan should be largely land-use—and we had enough on our plate, anyhow. But we didn't take up anything beyond land-use plans. If your plan is a land-use plan, I ask you, are you sure you want to go through this double process? That is, going through a 197-a and going through a 197-c, which is the ULURP [Uniform Land Use Review Procedure], which actually makes the changes. This is going to have to be determined by politics and a lot of things, but don't go—it was not a mistake for us, in a sense, because we weren't ready to go through a 197-c at all. Now that the world is in place, I'm not sure how effective a 197-a plan is always, if you're largely dealing with land-use issues. How useful it is, how useful.

Q1: I think we can get to the benefits of the 197-a, the relationship of how it works with ULURP a little later in the discussion. But more questions I have about the plan mainly focus on—when

we had our initial discussion, we talked about the part of the plan that dealt with housing, as well. Sort of how the housing advocates became involved in the plan, and how it became a preservation plan as well as partially—which, because of negotiations, had essentially become part of the affordable housing plan, as well. Can you talk a little bit about how the affordable housing people were involved in the process, and how it never panned out, and how that part was lost in the plan?

Kirkland: Well, actually, I became active in the *[unclear]*. I became very much aware of the affordable housing. There was a very active group. Its leader was Jane Wood, who I always think of as a secular—oh, dear. See, I block on names. The Catholic Saint of Poverty who was about to be *[unclear]*. Yes. Well, she at that time, Jane Wood, was a communist, which is a little different. Jane came from an upper-class family in Philadelphia, and she lived in a tenement on 18th Street. She spent her summers on Nantucket, with her family, but then she came back, every year, to the tenement on 18th Street. Worked all year for affordable housing—above all, avoiding displacement. People being evicted by landlords, harassment, all that kind of thing. That's what she was talking about. I'd seen this, and I said, "We need people besides the upscale people into the block association. There aren't enough of them and they aren't forceful enough. This was a very effective group. We saw displacement and affordable housing was a major problem, so I said, "I'll go to Jane Wood, who's a very saintly person."

So we sort of formed this arrangement. First of all, she loved the idea of preservation in the Chelsea Historic District, and the character of Chelsea. She loved that. Also, she had never looked beyond just keeping people in their homes. The idea of creating affordable housing was

one that appealed to her, and appealed to so many people in the organization. They were so grateful to me for suggesting it. I'm going to tell you, I've never felt so bad as when the plan went through without that and we had to give it up. I felt I'd lied to them. I hadn't, but I'd deceived them. I had the cause which I thought was an admirable one, but it was lost. It's the same fight that it is now over zoning that's going on all over the city and manufacturing zones. Is there going to be affordable housing? The city is still resisting the same type of things we said. If you build in a manufacturing zone, a certain amount of the housing must be affordable housing. That's essentially what we said. We confined it to one particular zone. We got an opinion from the Municipal Arts Society, saying it was legal but undesirable. Of course, their counsel decided, "Oh, no." It wasn't time. They had an excuse. At that time the Supreme Court [of the United States] was acting very weakly on public benefit, condemnation, and for public benefit, without compensation. There were a lot of cases that were causing difficulty. The Supreme Court eventually went back on that, to some extent. There was a time when I could see how lawyers would be worried. But they're still worried, and now the case law is in their favor, I think.

Q1: Can we say that the Chelsea Plan was two-pronged? That it was mainly about preserving the character of the neighborhood, but it was also about these other housing-related issues?

Kirkland: Yes, yes.

Q1: Can we talk a little bit more about the preservation component, and sort of geographically where we were talking about? You mentioned—you sort of jumped into the plan, but I'm not sure the audience knows exactly where we're talking about in Chelsea, specifically. Between

which avenues, between which streets, and maybe talk just a minute about where the transfer development rights were going. Where you wanted the upzoning to take place, ultimately, in the end.

Kirkland: Well, we didn't especially want that, but we were willing to accept it *[laughs]*. We took a lot more than we wanted, but I'll tell you that. No, essentially, we started with the idea of the Chelsea Historic District. I don't know if most of you know that. It's between roughly Tenth Avenue eastward, toward Eighth Avenue, from between 23rd and 20th Street, in very rough terms. It is centered around the General Theological Seminary, which you probably know, in the area, and extends—the extension, especially, extends somewhat eastward from that. We saw that as the low—I looked at it as the shape of the community. The first planning book, one of the few I ever read, which is [Kevin A.] Lynch's *The Shape [Image] of the City*. I thought in those terms, and I said, "Here we have a kind of—we have an urban form," a phrase I gradually learned.

We're around the Chelsea Historic District and blocks nearby, which had exactly the same scale, essentially. We said, "Keep it low." Then we'd scale up, to some extent, especially to the east, up toward—from essentially Eighth Avenue, across Seventh Avenue, which was high, and then up to Sixth Avenue, which is, as I say, the loft district, in the Ladies' Mile. This was the old loft buildings there. Then to some extent we had to deal with—we sort of skirted around the various housing projects through there. We did, so that we—other places—we sort of picked out small areas which were of low bulk, isolated them and did that. The main thing was this urban form, and I knew it was a buzzword at that time, so I made the most of it *[laughs]*.

Q2: I'm actually going to ask two quick questions, because there are a lot of people who aren't necessarily from New York. Two things, just as somebody who was living in the [Greenwich] Village at that time, and that Ladies' Mile area was largely abandoned at that point. Did people think about that, at that point, at all? Or did that come much later?

Kirkland: It came a little later. Jack [Taylor] was here last time, and you never asked him much about the Ladies' Mile. Jack Taylor, who is our president. I am honored to be his vice-president—don't ask who the rest of us are *[laughter]*. But this was—the idea rose independently, the idea of saving—in fact, Tony [Anthony C. Wood], as well as Jack, will remember the people who actually started this. I went through and it took me a long time before I realized that these things were not just warehouses, they were extraordinary buildings. I learned that they were the old department stores. I hadn't gotten much farther when the Drive to Protect the Ladies' Mile District was formed, and I was sort of enlisted. I'm not quite sure—various people enlisted me. Christabel Gough was one of them—a preservationist, you know. Many of you know.

Q2: My other question is in 1983, the Joyce Theater opened, and became a real anchor in that community—involved, with some sadness—I saw restaurants that had been there since my childhood go away. I just wondered—since the Joyce Theater, a lot of money went into the creation of reclaiming that theater and making it a venue for modern dance. I just wonder if, in your talking about the 197-a plan, if this was a factor.

Kirkland: Well, we were aware that—you see, it's on Eighth Avenue. We were well aware—one of the questions I learned from it later was the great fight at City Planning was about keeping Eighth Avenue low. We saw it as it was becoming, and has since become, the real heart of Chelsea. At that time it wasn't so clear, but we could see that it was the central part of Chelsea. The area immediately to the east was roughly in character to areas of the West End, although a little higher and more mixed.

Therefore, we saw it as preserving the character of Eighth Avenue, later. I was told later that that was one of the biggest fights in the staff at City Planning—conceiving the idea that Eighth Avenue should be low, when it was above a subway line. You see, they always want it on the subway. They forget that people can walk halfway down the block. It never quite made sense. You should just do it right along the subway line, and you don't even make it as—if they made nodes—at the station line, at the stand, no. There may be half a mile between the stations, but it's just as high. You go off to the sides, and it's low. It always seemed to me that this was an over-simplification in planning terms.

Q1: As a resident of Chelsea, too, I thank you for that. I live on Eighth Avenue and 21st Street *[laughter]*. Some of the biggest challenges that you talked about—you talked about funding was a big challenge. You talked about convincing the city, essentially, what the community's goals for the plan were, and what the community's objectives of the plan would be. Do you have any other challenges that you thought were strong, that you really remember, that were hurdles to get over, to really get the plan adopted?

Kirkland: Well, there was the 23rd Street Association, which was a business association. Of course, they were automatically opposed to it. We were very lucky, however, because we had—I mean, I knew some of the members, so I think I may have softened a little. But I knew one of them very well, Paul [E.] Gay, and I want to make a tribute to Paul Gay, because he was a real-estate man. People who worked for him would sometimes say, "He doesn't really want to make money." He wanted to create a community in Chelsea. Actually, he directed people to essentially—what we would call gentrifying, upping the place. People thought because the area was filled with rooming houses and so on, and, unfortunately, displacement did occur, but that's how the area became an attractive area. It was because people were looking for inexpensive housing. Think of it! Inexpensive housing in Chelsea. Houses that were potentially handsome, some of them were actually handsome. Where they could raise their children and have them go to the public school—public school?

Well, that was the '50s. People really were looking for that, so the gentrification of Chelsea did occur. Jane Wood's organization, oddly, was bound and against the gentrification of Chelsea. There are always goods in fighting. But they formed the core of the block association. The activists that got the historic district, and that actually formed a good deal of our support in getting the 197-a plan.

Q1: Just to reverse that question—what do you think are some of the highlights of the plan, that you're really most proud about? That you think other communities can take away from this plan, that are really excellence in this 197-a plan?

Kirkland: Of course, when I look back at it, I see all the mistakes that I made *[laughs]*. That's always bad. But, no—because we took a chance on it, not knowing what it was. So much of it was just luck. Of course, we could have been a little luckier, but I think, on the whole, we were very lucky to be as lucky as we were. I think the concept of treating a community contextually, as a whole, was one that, in a sense—I'm sure other people had had it—but it was one that we tried to put into effect. That was the inspiration. Not just one block, not just the historic district, but the area around it. What they call transitional zoning. I mean, buffer zoning is a naughty word, but I think transitional is better because, actually, as we got farther away from the historic district, we did go farther up. Partly because the buildings tended to be higher, or more mixed, but also because it did it in the urban form.

That, I think, putting these things together I think was perhaps one of the best things we did. The idea of bringing into it these social goals, and of removing—of discouraging displacement, we didn't think there could be anything else—and creating affordable housing. We did look beyond, even if only—the only factor we had—I think we had discouraged displacement in the area, where there was a protective zone, because no new buildings would have been built in those except on vacant lots in large measure. There were no new buildings built except on vacant lots. These are the things which I'm happy about. Of course, that we—being the first, I'm not sure to what extent *[unclear]* would have occurred with or without us. But certainly, we did make it real, even if out of sheer ignorance.

Q1: One thinks of the Chelsea Plan as a model that other 197-a plans can be based on, for developing plans that have a preservation component to them. But when you were developing

this plan, you obviously didn't have this model to look at, to use as a guide. What models were you looking at? I know you mentioned that you had worked with Sandy Hornick, I know you had looked at the Upper West Side. Was there anything else that you were using, sort of as a way of deciding on scale and contextual character in developing this plan?

Kirkland: Actually, no. I mean, only later did I actually meet Ethel Sheffer, who was on the West Side rezoning. I know, for example, people like Halina Rosenthal came and talked to me about it later. Apparently, it was an idea which—I mean, the ideas of urban form—it was there. We were—I just looked around in that part, and as far as I was concerned, I created. Like many creations it was probably not so new. It was just a reflection of ideas that were around. But it did put them together. I think that's all.

Q1: From a policy standpoint, I think we can sort of switch gears here and talk more about the relationship of the 197-a plan to that of how it relates, in your case, to the Uniform Land Use Review [ULURP] process. How you were discouraging of going through that process—because it is quite laborious, it does take a lot of time to do, a lot of work, and a lot of money to make happen. The end product, I think, one can all agree, is something that is a very tangible product—that you're actually changing the zoning and using it as a protective tool for preservation. I think that is really—the main topic, in some sense, of this discussion today is how can zoning and planning be used as a tool for protecting and maintaining the character and scale of a neighborhood? In deciding to use zoning as a tool, you had talked about how City Planning was essentially reluctant to deal with—to accommodate the downzoning, and that upzoning

would be needed, to compensate the density. What were some of the reactions that the community had given to that type of approach?

Kirkland: It was a completely new idea to us. City Planning still sticks by it. If you downzone an area, and if there's any real potential for development, or even imaginary potential for development—then unless the political process is very strongly against it, they will want compensation to preserve opportunities for development. We said there were opportunities for development, but actually we proposed a very small upzoning in a little corner. Then, as I said, we did propose, essentially what one might think of as an upzoning. It was a special district which had a provision for the area of eastern Chelsea, which is on the edge of the Ladies' Mile.

So we really felt that—but I would say no. If you're land-use only, or largely, I would think twice before you do a 197-a plan. But if you have other goals, work together, because then even the other goals can affect other departments of the city. You can use it as a tool. I was surprised how preservation, essentially—if you take the shape and downzone a loft where a historic district is, or where individual significant objects or landmarks are—it makes the task so much easier for Landmarks [Preservation Commission]. Otherwise, the Landmarks has—and I watched this over the years, as we were working, as we thought after we'd formed the first Chelsea Plan.

When I was the chairman of what's now the Public Review Committee of the Historic Districts Council, we could see Landmarks struggling every day with the idea that additions—they call them enlargements at City Planning, but they call them additions everywhere else. Rooftop addition, a rear-yard addition, was allowed by the zoning. You might have a three-story building

or a four-story row-house, where you could actually build ten stories. There are such cases, but more likely they'll build six or seven stories. This would be the—therefore, the Landmarks is not allowed to regulate use. Oh, that's in the law. It can do everything but—and bulk. It cannot be used in bulk. You call it scale now, it has to deal with scale. But technically you cannot regulate use or bulk.

Therefore, you had a real—by bringing the zoning down to where the total floor area ratio, as they say, the bulk, and the front yard, and, essentially, the building line is determined by the building line nearby. That is, people set back the building so they could rise higher—the tower. But if you can require, say, a street wall, along where the dominant street wall is right along the building line, or twenty feet back—as for setbacks in Chelsea, if you can get those into the zoning resolution, then Landmarks doesn't have to fight that battle. That battle is done for it, and they have a much better chance of regulating historic buildings and historic districts successfully.

Q1: With developing a 197-a planning, you're talking a lot about land use. I'm definitely confused about the need for doing a 197-a plan, if it's exclusively a land-use plan. It's sort of redundant. The beauty of a 197-a plan is that they're most effective when there are several issues at stake. When you're dealing with several issues, and if it's a non-land-use issue. If it is a land-use issue, which is the case in the Chelsea 197-a plan, it just makes sense to gather it together to work through the 197-c process.

But your comments about landmarking are really interesting, and I want to talk more about that. It seems very clear, in listening to you, that essentially a cap on bulk, such as downzoning,

served as an aid for preserving the scale of the building. In terms of preserving actual buildings themselves, obviously zoning cannot do that. There's no tool that we had, essentially, that can—that can essentially—other than landmark legislation itself, can preserve the actual façade. The actual exterior character or interior character of a building.

If you were to do it again, would you use zoning as the same—would you do it the same way as you did it before? Would you go through the same gyrations and the same movements you did before? Or would you do something different?

Kirkland: As I say *[unclear]* originally, is that much of Chelsea was probably not going to be landmarked. Therefore, the thing to do was to preserve its character. So that if you preserved the general character, then you at least preserved the scale—of an area, by the way, which, by and large, depends on general character, not on individual buildings. Otherwise, there would be a chance of landmarking.

It is an effective way, as I called it, transitional zoning around the historic district—very tight around the historic district, and the areas which are like the historic district, then loosen it up. Then, at least, there isn't this abrupt change that, say, you get in South Street Seaport. That was the most extraordinary—you come out of the canyons of downtown Manhattan, and suddenly you're in this low-rise area. Of course, on the edges, it's caused great, great problems—as people who know landmarks know—on that huge, vacant lot, because making the transition. That way you can preserve an entire community. The historic part of a community, as in Chelsea, may only be a rather small part of a community, because of all the influences that have done it, but

much of it was built to the 19th-century scale. If you keep that 19th-century scale, then you have a community which can be sort of unified, not broken up like the Upper East Side, with all these huge buildings and then the middle-sized or low buildings on the side streets. That way you feel you're in the same place all the time, and that is the essence of experiencing a community. Therefore, you do preserve a community as a whole. That would be my answer to that. There's no tool for preserving, as you said, a façade, unless you do something right like landmarking.

Q1: What advice would you give to communities that aren't so lucky as Chelsea, as having a historic district, as essentially—as ammunition for creating a down-zoning that surrounds the district to some extent, and an actual district itself. I'm thinking of communities in Brooklyn, of communities in the Bronx, that have a substantial amount of landmark buildings in a geographic neighborhood, but do not actually have a district. So it's difficult to say—to talk about the scale around the buildings, because there is no—there really isn't around, essentially. It's just each of the landmarks, by themselves.

Kirkland: Sometimes there is a scale, a 19th-century scale. Let us say, for example, that most of them are 19th-century buildings, 19th-century scale. They still preserve the scale around these individual—the area in which these individual buildings are congregated. But you know, in Williamsburg, for example, they worked for years and years on this, and made plans under several different people with Community Board 1. It was a terrible battle which, unfortunately, I don't know the details of. But they did a 197-a plan, and I was struck by it. City Planning took most of it, but the scale of the individual block, in which almost nothing was designated, was preserved in the large part of north Williamsburg—here is supposedly a northern Williamsburg.

They also wanted to continue it to the waterfront, just as they were going to do in Chelsea. Landmarks said, "Oh, the waterfront! Let's build big." Because they can't "cast something to cast shadows on," and it's a great opportunity for development.

They preserved much of the character of that neighborhood without the historic district, and they did this with the 197-a plan, which City Planning adopted. But the tradeoff with the adoption, as ours was, was taller—and in the long run is going to be—is taller buildings in some areas and the waterfront. In Greenpoint, for example, which has a historic district but had no 197-a plan, they didn't get that kind of fine-tuned zoning. They got a general contextual zoning, but it wasn't, it's only very, very rough. It doesn't fit, so that particular historic district is without protection.

Q2: We're going to pause here one second, for Richard to take care of some technical business, and then—

[INTERRUPTION]

Q2: In asking those questions, I also want you to perhaps frame some of the questions, for you, yourself to answer, about what's happening today, and what have people working in other communities learned from the Chelsea example. I know, particularly, when we met a few weeks ago and were talking about this, in the Bronx this one place—Greenpoint and Williamsburg are two good examples of neighborhoods that people have a sense of what's happening in the district, both the good and the bad changes that have come along. Okay? So I'm going to turn it

back over to you, and we'll probably go for another seven, eight, nine more minutes. We'll see. They won't lynch us if we go over a few more minutes.

Kirkland: I think some of the key lessons that, in my experience, some of the other plans have learned, or some of the other communities, rather, have learned in developing their plans is the quality of the issue they select has to be one that is somewhat appealing to the city. For example, the affordable housing component. Although the preservation component was very interesting to the city, and the community was able to work well with that issue, the affordable housing component got lost. Although almost every community in the city, as many of you all know, asks for some form of affordable housing in their plans, I think a lot of them have learned that it's really an issue—it's a battle they will lose rather than win. The ultimate goal of the plan is to really get them adopted. What communities have learned is that the plans can linger for a very long time. Sometimes, in the case of Chelsea's plan, which is almost fifteen years—some of them, in the case of the Williamsburg plan, it has almost been twenty years.

It's important that the plans are very tight, and that the issues are very concise, for adoption purposes. In terms of the preservation issues, though, with some of the other plans, specifically talking about Williamsburg and dealing with their plan, they really have very little solution. They have few solutions for dealing with their preservation issue, which is really unfortunate, because of the situation where they don't have districts. They're figuring out, really, how to work with the landmarks they already have. I think a lot of communities sort of face that. They can include preservation as one of the side things that's in the plan, and it's not a priority issue. Oftentimes we'll see in a plan that historic preservation will be thrown into another issue. It will be thrown

into housing, or it will be thrown into economic development, but oftentimes it never gets its own, independent issue or attention it really deserves. I think that has a lot to do with the way the community frames the recommendation, and how they're asked to frame the recommendations.

Oftentimes, what they can do—they can only make recommendations that ask for Landmarks to look at this building, to consider this building. Or, for buildings that are already landmarked, they can only say that you create policy that can to some extent preserve the building, somehow preserve the building in. Oftentimes, the condition of some of the landmarks, particularly in the Bronx, are in horrible condition. Many of the community boards simply ask for enforcement, to eventually renovate or eventually enhance the original character of the façade. What I've learned, in working with community-based planning, is that communities are—they're not as articulate as they probably should be, in explaining their concern for historic preservation. You can see the passion that the residents and the community board have for the issue, but for some reason it's getting lost in the process when developing the plan. At some point there's a disconnect between that. It's something that the preservation community can really do, to work with communities to begin really fine-tune those recommendations and get them into the plan and get them adopted. Because oftentimes they do get lost in the shuffle.

One interesting thing that I have come to the conclusion—looking through, actually, the Environmental Impact Statement for the Hudson Yards, which is several thousand pages, depending on what font you do it. I've seen estimates from three thousand to seven thousand. Anyhow, it's huge. To my surprise, they had *[unclear]* myself, a great deal of pressure making sure that *[unclear]* preservation components were included. They did a good job. There were

more buildings declared eligible for the landmarking than I had any idea the Landmark Commission would accept. I wasn't surprised at the number of National Register [of Historic Places], because their standards are different. They're more historic, less architectural, and you can find history anywhere if you start looking for it, in any area that's been around.

Then they would say—I think there were eight or ten buildings that were declared eligible for landmarking, and they said the impact on some of them—which were on development sites or on nearby, are unmitigatable [ph]. Period. I said, "Why are they 'unmitigatable'?" They have been declared eligible for landmarking. Why? The Landmarks Preservation [Commission] is a governmental institution. There is no way we would or can or should try to say to the Landmarks Commission, "Designate this building." That is—or I think it is—a discretionary action, whatever the legal issues may be. I don't think we should try to—but if it's eligible, can't they hold a hearing? Shouldn't the mitigation be required? You require the highway department to make changes in the streets, or the sidewalks. Can't you say to the Landmarks Commission, "Hold hearings on these buildings, which you, yourselves, have declared eligible in a public document?"

That's the first part. The second part is, all these buildings are registered. Well, some of them are fair-sized. Why don't you say, "Why isn't some governmental institution—perhaps the Landmarks Commission—directed to produce nominations, actual nominations, for the register of every one of these buildings that's declared eligible?" Now, of course, that won't save them from private action. On the other hand, if the owner has a nomination in his hand, he can get the tax advantage right away, for preserving his building. At least there is a reduction in threat to

buildings which potentially could be lost or defaced in a major rezoning like this, and I would like to put that forward. It's not technically a 197-a issue, but it's an issue that comes up among the 197-a plans, I have an environmental review like 197-c plans. People should be exploring that. Of course, it would probably require more staff for the Landmark Commission. Nonetheless, we can all ask for that, and I think every community board should do so. We do every year, Community Board 4, in Manhattan.

I think there are ways in which perhaps you can sometimes hit these things—because these actions which you're talking about—197-a, 197-c—do require environmental review. This is one way of approaching it. I'd be glad to hear others, but that is one. I would like to suggest—

Q2: Just so we don't thoroughly confuse people, I think everybody probably now understands what a 197-a plan is, but 197-c is—

Kirkland: —is ULURP. Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, which actually changes zoning, sells land, or things like that.

Q2: So the 197-a plan only becomes effective once it goes to the 197-c—

Kirkland: —which is—yes.

Q1: Yes and no.

Kirkland: It becomes influential if you're lucky.

Q1: Yes, that's true. That's true. You know, the ULURP process is a provision that was created to essentially give community input for large city actions and projects. The 197-a plans oftentimes have a land use component, and, therefore, trigger the URLURP process. But there are many other ways the ULURP process can be triggered, essentially, and it's a good process because it gives involvement to the community, which is really important. Essentially, it is a congruent process. Landmarks has, essentially, a hearing, but it takes much longer to actually follow out. I think it's ninety—

Kirkland: Seven months, roughly, about seven months—sixty days. Sixty days for the community board. But here, if you want to deal with trying to influence the 197-c, you do the same thing. You have to arouse the community, you have to get the politicians on your side. Otherwise, you're not going to have any influence. But remember, the [New York] City Council makes the final decision on the ULURP—so get your council member on your side. That is the most important thing you can do if you're going through. Otherwise, you can spout off anything you want. Some say planning commissioners are more sympathetic than others, but the fundamentals are going to stay the same unless you get to the council. Unless you get your council on your side, and make the changes at the council.

Q2: Well, since we're getting to the point where we do want to turn this over to other people for questions, I'm going to thank you very much for taking us through the whole Chelsea process *[applause]*.

Before we turn it over to the public, the question I have for you is, since this started out as a project you were doing for your thesis, did you answer the question that you set out to pose? And what do you think about it now?

Q1: It's funny, you're asking that. The 197-a process is an excellent process to begin the exploration of preservation. I think the best process still, very much, is the landmarking process. But 197-a has proven, in several cases, in addition to the Chelsea Plan, as a tool to promote preservation. I think it's really important that we understand what that means, in a sense, where preservation is more than simply landmarking a building. Maintaining the character of a neighborhood is essentially preservation, too, and I think that's one element that a lot of the plans have in them. It's an aspect that I never really thought about that much, actually, in developing my thesis. I was so focused on the landmarking process. But preservation as a greater context is really important. I think that's what the 197-a plan should really provide. It grounds the community, and it them to look at many different issues.

Preservation is one of them, as it should always be one of them, but it also taught some neighborhoods where there are no buildings—well, I don't want to say there aren't any buildings to preserve, but in many cases the community doesn't really see, or Landmarks hasn't sort of gotten it. There are many *[unclear]* that sort of address that. But those communities that do have landmark buildings, the 197-a is an excellent tool to embark upon. Specifically, it may focus on preservation as the issue, as a single issue, rather than doing a comprehensive plan. It's an excellent tool for looking at zoning, for really exploring the character of a neighborhood.

Q2: Thank you. Questions from other people?

Anthony C. Wood: I'm Tony Wood, the chair of the Archive Project. Ed, I have a question for you, kind of taking us to a more theoretical level, because you've been looking at this field for a long time. It seems as if preservation has been reluctant to get involved with the zoning and planning aspects of the larger neighborhood. I'm wondering if you agree with that, and b), if you can give some thought as to why you think that many preservationists are reluctant. Then lastly, have you seen that change? Because you've been dealing now with both preservation and planning—we'll say, at least, discreetly, for several decades *[laughs]*. Have you seen a change in the willingness of preservationists to get into the types of issues that you've so deeply gotten into?

Kirkland: I feel sometimes as if had I only dipped my toe into planning, because it is so complex. I think this is one of the reasons why preservationists who are focused on individual buildings, purely on historic preservation—usually architectural, sometimes historic—tend to focus on that. Well, I find most of them—most people are just baffled by planning. When I talked to my block association about what they were going to do to West Chelsea, I found myself talking in the most elementary terms. It takes a great deal to learn it. Most people in preservation are focused on one particular area, one particular building, even, so I think it's very hard. We are trying, at the Historic Districts Council—I will give a plug to the Historic Districts Council, of which I'm on the board. We have a study, actually, well advanced, on protected and transitional zoning for historic districts. There are recommendations in that study, the first draft of which is sitting on

the table next to my computer, and has been for a couple of months. But that's where it is. I've looked at it, but I haven't done enough. It's promising, really promising, because we've been working on it for a long time. I think it's made great progress, from what I've seen of it.

But this is the idea. People would think of communities—and that, by the way, is a buzzword. If you want a buzzword for our time, it is community. If you think of the community—the "historic" community, or the "felt" community. I feel a part of Chelsea, where people feel—for example, a lot of the southern Chelsea people used to think they were in the Village, because it's rather like the Village. They thought they were Greenwich Village, because Chelsea was just an area which was only preserved in history because of the Theological Seminary, and the settlement house of the Hudson Guild. They were the two things that kept the idea of Chelsea alive. But now that Chelsea became aware of itself—we put in a 197-a plan, we went to those block associations—and now, of course, with everything that's happening in Chelsea, they're in Chelsea, and now Chelsea is expanding farther and farther east. I've seen buildings, Chelsea East, practically over to Fifth Avenue. The awareness of community *[unclear]* perhaps can help bring that in—is one of the ways that you can make people look farther and more widely, not just *[unclear]*.

Q3: I was struck by this whole notion of the political necessity to remove things from the plan in order to keep it moving forward and keep it viable, particularly the affordable housing division. I wondered a couple things. First of all, does that cause a lot of antagonism with the housing advocates in Chelsea? Second of all, how can we, as preservationists, try to integrate our work

with housing issues and affordable housing in a climate where the city does not want to discuss that at all?

Kirkland: They're willing to discuss affordable at infinite length. I assure you, as a member of the Community Board dealing with this issue, on a huge scale, because of the Hudson Yards rezoning, I assure you. I won't tell you how many meetings I've been about affordable housing, but how much is concrete is actually very little. Well, the people in Chelsea—I told you Janie [Jane] Wood was a saint, and she forgave me.

Q3: Did you turn her off on the idea?

Kirkland: No, no she still is a part of the Chelsea Plan, for a long time. Because the idea of creating—see, the idea of discouraging displacement did remain. That was the biggest thing in her work. Affordable housing was a wonderful thing, but the first time that creation of it she'd never really given much thought to. Her idea was preventing displacement, and since that component was still there and explicit—I made sure it was explicit in every statement of our goals—it was, I think—and, as I said, she was a saint, she forgave me. I think some of the other people in the group were not so forgiving.

Q2: More questions?

Audience Member: Yes. My name is Jasper. How do you make a 197-a plan effective? You said it was only influential if you were lucky. How do you create your own luck and make sure that --

because it seems like in Greenpoint, Williamsburg, the city is sort of paying lip service to the 197-a plan, but in some respects *[unclear]*.

Kirkland: I don't know enough about the details of what they planned—Eddie could probably answer that better. Actually, the zoning, part of the zoning near the waterfront was pretty much in North Williamsburg, was adopted. That much I know. I don't know about the other aspects. That's the only aspect I have followed at length. If you're lucky—well that is, we were lucky because we hit the right political people, to some extent, like Fred Armstein [ph] and charter revision [ph], and we lucked on then. We lucked out in other times. But the point is, if you keep pressing, and if you keep pushing—which we didn't always do—but if you keep pushing. If you keep talking to the politicians, if you keep talking to your neighbors, if you keep saying, "Well, this is there," and you remind every agency, "The 197-a plan says—" every time you deal with something, an agency is proposing something in the neighborhood, you can say it's not consistent with the 197-a plan. If it isn't consistent with 197-a, they're supposed to pay attention.

The point is, they're bureaucrats, and here is something that says they shouldn't. You don't realize how bureaucrats—most of them—are bound by the rules. If you have a legal document—and the 197-a plan is a legal document. I'm not saying it's an effective legal document—that says you're supposed to do something, they have to at least pretend to pay attention to it. That really does work.

When Community Board 4, for example, opposed the rezoning, the continued rezoning of the Columbus Center, that big building on the West Side of Columbus Circle, we were able to get

some concessions out of them. Because it's in Board 4, and we had opposed it. It was a side issue—I managed to get into it, because it's way at the north end of the area but I managed to get into it. Every time they'd say, "Well, the community boards didn't oppose it," because there was also [Community Board] 7 and [Community Board] 5 involved. I would say, "Community Board 4 opposed it," and they had to pay a little attention. They're people who go by the rules, they go by the book. It is there, and if you keep reminding them, and have the politicians keep reminding them—the council members. They pay attention, too, to state politicians because the money comes from them. So that's one way.

Q1: You have to remember too—your plan is a very unique plan, because the city has gotten much smarter since your plan was adopted.

Kirkland: They know how to get around it.

Q1: To answer part of your question, they do not adopt plans that make specific recommendations, for example. If the community says, "I want a park on the corner of 43rd and Fifth Avenue," that recommendation will be "striked." The new recommendation that will replace it is that the community calls for a park within the community bounds—not the actual location, not the size. Exactly. It gives a lot more leeway to the agency to deal with the recommendation how they see fit. It could be a vest-pocket park, it could be a park as large as Central Park. It makes it very difficult for the community board to monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

There are ways they can do that. Using district needs is a good tool, working with OMB [Office of Management and Budget] is a good tool. Just simply communicating with the agencies on a regular basis is always, really, the best thing. Any time the city has another, alternative plan or study, remind them about how the plan was adopted, and that this is the agreed-upon guide document for this particular neighborhood. But it is very difficult.

Kirkland: It is immensely difficult. Our plan, actually, was—nobody knew what a 197-a plan was. Except, in the early years, there was thought to be—well, with 197-c—it was thought to be a land use plan. Now it's gotten to be a wider comprehensive plan with the charter revision, essentially. But we made particular recommendations, and that was one of the things they proposed to us. When we actually got to the implementation, there was a code, interestingly, that said, "Continue existing zoning, continue—map the contextual equivalent of existing zoning." Map slightly lower—map lower, map slightly higher—and every one of these corresponded almost exactly to a particular zoning district. They just put it in general terms. But they put it in "pseudo-general" terms.

Dorothy Miner: Yes. You might explain the two-step process, because that's where the community board often loses. You might point that out.

Q1: Part of the process of adopting a 197-a is that it is at the initial stage where City Planning works with the community board to develop the plan—which is great, which is really important.

Kirkland: We were before that time *[laughter]*. [

Q1: No, no, *[unclear]* is still on the community boards raised the money to do the research, still, but working with the community boards and drafting recommendations is helpful. There's a step in the process where the plan leaves the community board's review, and it is distributed to the other agencies for review. At that point there's a discussion, essentially behind-the-scenes, sort of backdoor banter, between the agency and City Planning, the agency where the recommendation is most relevant to. For example, if it's a transportation recommendation, it'll go to DOT [New York City Department of Transportation]. If it's a landmark, to LPC [Landmarks Preservation Commission], etcetera, HPD [New York City Housing Preservation and Development].

Those agencies will essentially sort of decide on how the recommendation will play out. If it will get lost in the plan, if it'll be eliminated in the plan, if it'll be re-written in the plan. Then City Planning essentially presents this back to the community, and says either take this or leave this. The community oftentimes tries to work with City Planning, but it's usually those recommendations that they care most about that, unfortunately, get lost or eliminated from the plan, and it becomes very difficult. It's the minor ones that get left. You make a decision. If this plan got adopted, what really got adopted? It's really unfortunate, how the whole process takes place. It's not as open and collaborative and transparent as it should be, unfortunately.

Simeon Bankoff: Forgive me if you've answered this already, but just taking what Eddie was talking about. We recently had a situation with buildings on West 23rd Street—the Hardwick and Flagg [ph] warehouses—where the Landmarks Commission basically said, "What are you

talking about? We signed off on the destruction of these buildings by the adoption of the Chelsea Plan." How do you balance that, how do you answer that charge, which was a particular bureaucrat's—

Kirkland: No, City Planning put in the upzoning of that block on West 23rd Street. It was not part of our plan at all, and it was part of the price we paid. No, it was like, "Joe Rose wants it," I was indirectly told. Maybe he wanted it, and maybe West 23rd Street wanted it, too. But I don't know—I know Joe Rose wanted it—that was quite clear to us—and it was take it or leave it. I knew those buildings. I knew at least one of them was valuable, because it was in one of [Andrew] Dolkart's survey. The other one was immensely handsome, and the Hardwick building. At that time I said, "Well, we'll face up to it when we 'get it." It was so bad, for example, so *[unclear]* the upzoning of it. I think most other people in the neighborhood knew that I swallowed it. I kept looking for, "What's a way around it?" Finally I saw a way—because it was in a Columbia studio and *[unclear]* Columbia studio—when they "invented" the building, I saw you could build on top of it without destroying it and put the bulk over on 24th Street. I immediately suggested that, but it was too late. The demo [demolition] permit had already been achieved.

Even so, I'm going to tell you that somebody at City Planning called up and Mark Silverman said, "What are you people doing even looking at this? You signed off on it." Because, of course, *[nclear]* didn't mention it at all." Interestingly, those buildings, though very close to the waterfront, were never mentioned in the Environmental Impact Statement.

Katrina Miles: My name is Katrina, and I'm the director of the Latimer House in Flushing, [Queens]. My background—I came from Florida—I've only been at this for a few months. But economic development and historic preservation are two of the things I'm interested in, particularly the marriage of the two. That's something I've been doing for several years now, marry to *[unclear]* your plans. I've done this in Florida, writing an economic development plan, even for a whole region, where you work with the state laws in Tallahassee and with the state government. They look at the bottom line, "We'll work with you in preservation as long as it's making money for us."

How do you actually write economic development into your 197-a plan so they will help you with your preservation efforts? As long as they know there's going to be some kind of revenue that comes in, which is, ultimately, what they want?

Kirkland: In New York, at least in Manhattan, the question is if you don't like the economic development plans, the developers write them for you through City Planning. The question is stopping development. In many places you are not—this is not true in many of the outer boroughs, and even in uptown Manhattan. There that issue, I think, would be one that would be very interesting to take up in Harlem and so on. There have been so many difficulties, partly due to local political problems, that making a study of how preservation can serve economic development is true. As a bulk, you have in most of Manhattan preservation almost never serves economic development. You could always build something there, and that is a problem. But I think there are areas near the boroughs where it probably—say, Flushing, for example, where

you are with the Historic Mile, and so on—I think that might be a place where it might still work.

Although even there, you know what's happening there much better than I, but I know, for example, that the old [First] Congregational Church there—well, it's a federated church now—but it's in a way a development. It's a problem of how you do it. There is this thing of transferring development rights, and you take the development rights from a preserved building and transfer it. You can do that, of course, to adjacent properties anywhere in the city, within certain limits. With landmarking, you do it across the street, you do it around corners and a few things like that, as part of the block and so on. But these require a ULURP, by the way. These actually require a ULURP for procedure. The point is, what this does, when you're dealing with the character of a community, it makes even a bigger building—near the landmark, next to the landmark—so that you may preserve the building but you lose the character of the community. This is one of the built-in conflicts that you have, and I think it's a problem that would be in Flushing.

Q2: Well, I think we have to draw to an end. So I'm going to thank Ed Nelms and Ed Kirkland, and invite everybody to continue the dialogue over—

[END OF INTERVIEW]