

Kelly Carroll for NYPAP

Inspired by Grassroots Stories: Community Architectural Advocacy

Linda Cutler Hauck, John Kilcullen, Franco Paolino

Preservation League of Staten Island

November 16, 2021

Brad Vogel: Alright, good evening. My name is Brad Vogel and I am the Executive Director of the New York Preservation Archive Project, and our whole mission is to make sure that the story of the historic preservation movement in New York City gets preserved and told. And really, we do that as a way to inform future preservation efforts, but also really to inspire future preservation efforts. To show both the wins and the losses that make up this sort of grand tapestry, all the efforts of human beings, to try to save things that they find to be of special quality in the city.

So, tonight we have our fifth and final installment of a series that we've been doing now for several months in 2021. That is, the Inspired by Grassroots Stories: Community Architectural Advocacy series. And we have had some really great groups on here to talk about preservation at the intersection of neighborhood and community. And we've had lots of different slices of life from across the boroughs in New York City. And so that's why I'm really excited tonight that we will be looking at a different borough. A borough that some might say, is unexpected.

We will be heading on the ferry over to Staten Island. So, I'll let our moderator, Kelly Carroll, talk about that to a much greater extent here shortly. But first I did want to say we do have some sponsors who made this whole series possible. One of those is the New York State Council for the Arts so, NYSCA. Also Pat Reisinger, who is a gentleman who is out there trying to run pretty much every street in the city, so he has a great perspective on the city, and was there at the beginning as we started the sort of gestation for the idea for the series, so thank you Pat. And one other tidbit, you know, actually one more thank you first: we should thank the Historic Districts Council, our friends there who have done so much to network and grow out with all the different groups that have been on this program, helping to sort of generate a lot of the material that we are now learning the history about tonight.

But now on to this special pitch to those of you who are here tonight, we have a very special evening planned for this coming Monday, November 22 at actually from 5:30 to 7:30. We will have an oral history sharing event and essentially, it's taking people who narrated for this series of programs and from another effort that we had underway this year that was an oral history intensive. All of those narrators are welcome to show up and go beyond the virtual experience in person at the Fulton Stall Market in Lower Manhattan and tell a little bit more. Go beyond this, the screen phase, to tell you how preservation stories really unfolded in their neighborhoods. So, we have a great, great set of people who committed to that and we'll have some treats. Please do feel free to stop by. But now, without further ado, our moderator for the evening: a historic preservation consultant here in the city, Kelly Carroll.

Kelly Carroll: Thank you, Brad and thank you to our guests tonight joining us from Staten Island. And I also want to just thank our sponsors and the whole NYPAP team for putting together this amazing program. It was such a pleasure to work with everyone throughout this.

So, I am Kelly Carroll and I have the pleasure of speaking with three individuals tonight for our last oral history series, so I will go ahead and introduce them now. The first being Linda Cutler Hauck. She is a lifelong resident of Tottenville, Staten Island. Also, the founder in 2005 and current Director of the Tottenville Historical Society that is supposed to focus geographically on the southern communities of Staten Island. In 2005 she had the privilege of working side by side with Barnett Shepherd, founder of the Preservation League of Staten Island, on a project that began with a historic building survey.

Around the same time, the controversy surrounding the now designated James L. and Lucinda Bedell House quickly and fully propelled them into historic preservation efforts. Incidentally, that survey evolved into the highly acclaimed book, which many of you may have heard of, by Barnett Shepherd, *Tottenville, the Town the Oyster Built: Its People, Industry and Architecture*.

We also have John Kilcullen who has been a resident of Staten Island for the last 29 years. A Long Island native, he traded the big island for a smaller one. He and his husband, Jim, live in a restored New York City Landmark shingle-style Victorian in Tompkinsville's Fort Hill neighborhood. By day he works in Tottenville with New York City Parks, as the director of Conference House Park, a 270-acre park with five historic houses, three miles of shoreline, and an emerging new forest. An active member of the community, John is currently on the board of directors, President of the Preservation League of Staten Island, a volunteer organization advocating protecting the Island's architectural and historic environments.

He is also a member of the Island's Greenbelt Conservancy, and Friends of Tompkinsville Park. John enjoys open water swimming in Lower New York Bay and trail running on the many trails of the Greenbelt, and of course Conference House Park.

Last but not least, we have Franco Paolino, who is a resident of Staten Island and a board member and social media person for the Preservation League of Staten Island. And he also is the creator and manager of Wild Staten Island, which is a wonderful view into the borough that many may not otherwise see. So, with that, thank you all again. And my warmup question--and Linda has touched on this briefly in her bio--but every preservationist has a an induction story; this weird fascination we have with the built environment. I would like each of you to briefly describe if you had a flashpoint moment or an event that happened that opened you, that turned you into the preservationist that you are.

Linda Hauck: Absolutely, and that began in 2005. We had just begun to organize as a historical society here in Tottenville and, by the way, Tottenville is the only community--separate community--on Staten Island that has its own specific historical society. There is, of course, a Staten Island historical society but I saw and felt the need to preserve our history here, and therefore founded the historical society with great support from businesses and politicians and residents, and it just took off in 2005.

No sooner had we began to organize, if you recall in 2005 there was a building boom, and not so much new development as it was take one down, put three up. And Tottenville was hit hard by this. Nearly every street was losing its historic buildings, and as many as they could fit on the parcel--which tended to be larger parcels--were going up quickly. This is the house that inspired us to begin our efforts with historic preservation, and this is the James L. and Lucinda Bedell House on Amboy Road in Tottenville. This is before, and this is ultimately what happened when the builder--new owner/builder--after he bought the house and found out he could not demolish it as he wished to and put five townhouses on that lot.

And I have to say at that time there was great community support for the effort to stop this and not only for this particular house, but what was going on not only on the South Shore, but also on Staten Island. And members of the community did gather and we protested, we had walks, we wrote letters, and ultimately it was our mayor at the time--Mayor Bloomberg--who stepped in and stated at a community meeting that the house would be designated. And, of course, there was a lot of controversy about that too, but you know, we made a lot of noise and actually it really wasn't until about 2007, 2008 when the Recession hit that things started to slow down a bit.

But that was a turning point for us and we knew where we could find our history, which really had not been uncovered or discovered as yet, and yet we were losing the buildings that represent and tell us a story of our community's history. So, this was really a major turning point for us. And then, of course our involvement with the Preservation League of Staten Island started then with Barnett, and from there you know, I got to know and work with John and we continue to collaborate together.

Kelly Carroll: Thank you. Yeah, and the Bedell House is such a poster child of a preservation success story, and today, through all of what it's been through, it's such a beautiful piece of architecture and an asset to Tottenville.

Linda Hauck: Yeah. Unfortunately for every one we've lost, or every one we've gained, we've lost four--at least four--and that continues today. We've had some really wonderful examples of not only historical, but architecturally significant houses and we've not been able to attain landmark designation for them. So, learning about the landmarks process too was something that has taken time to get used to. And it can be discouraging and disheartening at times, and we see that more so now than before, than in 2005 even. And it continues, unfortunately, as John well knows.

Kelly Carroll: Yes, and we will, we'll touch on that culture of preservation for sure in Staten Island that might be different than in some other areas of the city. John and Franco, do you want to share your flashpoint moment?

John Kilcullen: Okay, my and I think, hello everyone! Oh just on cue, the dog starts to bark—Walker--I'm, my flash point was, and I put the going from Long Island to Staten Island, and I remember the first time I rode my bike to the ferry, took the ferry over to Snug Harbor, and I was struck. I'd never been to Staten Island. And I was struck by the number of old homes and then from there, I mean the bug bit. It was Fillmore Street that goes right into Snug Harbor. And I said, look at these homes, and it was amazing. So, that was my flash point.

And then started to see how things rapidly were you know, Linda mentioned, this is probably 1998-99. And I was struck at wow, this beautiful house, and next thing I know it's in a large lot in West Brighton/Livingston is being torn down and three houses are going up. Quickly met Barnett, Jim Ferreri and many of the folks at the Preservation League and you know, it's something that I stuck with. Linda is my sounding board around the frustrations I have with just preservation on Staten Island. It is so difficult, and Kelly and I talked about this in the greater city, and Jean [Prabhu] as well. It is difficult, but I think we have to stick with it. So, that was the flashpoint--driving my bike, riding my bicycle and saying oh my gosh, this is a wonderful nugget and we need to preserve it.

Kelly Carroll: Thank you.

Franco Paolino: I think mine was, part of Staten Island what makes Staten Island, Staten Island is the unique houses we have. These older homes. This beautiful architecture, the history behind them and then like Linda was saying, there was this building boom where they were taking down these old, historic houses and then they were putting up four or five cookie cutter houses that all look the same that didn't have anything unique about them, there's no history about them. And, that wasn't even so much the flashpoint for me, it was more so that there was no public outcry. People, they didn't seem to care. I mean, they...obviously there are groups that...and people that did care, but overwhelmingly there were...people did not care.

Whatever, tear down the house, let's put up six. That's what they were saying, and most of that was because people wouldn't understand the history behind a lot of these houses and when I would tell them well, this is the history of that house that just went down, they'd be like 'Oh? Really? I didn't know that.' And even some houses that are still standing, when you tell people the history about them, there's an appreciation. So, that was kind of like a catalyst for me to kind of get out the history of these houses and of the Island's, so that people can actually appreciate it. If you don't know the history about it, you don't know something's there, then you're not going to appreciate it, you're not going to protect it. So, that was kind of it for me.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah. I can appreciate that. Staten Island is so different than the other boroughs in terms of its built environment, that it's harder sometimes for people to see the individual resource because there isn't this monolithic street of row houses, you know, for instance, like, how some of the other boroughs look. And people can have a hard time seeing one property for what it is, or even appreciating the history, like you've described.

So, in that vein Staten Island actually has the least amount of landmarks per borough out of the other five, which is, you know, a bit sad because it also has the oldest architecture out of all of the boroughs. And I want to be careful and not to not give credit to the Landmarks Commission, this past summer we did have a recent designation of Conference House Park which reflected the significance of Native Americans who had inhabited that site intergenerationally--I think for six generations--and then there was also a designation in 2019 of Audrey Lorde's house.

In both of these cases, these designations were put in place on resources that already had a layer of protection. Conference House Park being a New York City Park, the Audrey Lorde House being a part of the St. Paul's Avenue-Stapleton Heights Historic District, which was designated in 2004. While it is important to expand periods of significance or events of significance and bake these into designations, Staten Island did not gain any new resources from a regulatory standpoint. And I call this double dipping designations, okay? So, prior to that--we'll get into landmark designations that happened a few years ago, before that--but I want to hear some thoughts from you guys about how you feel about these double dipped designations that were your most recent.

John Kilcullen: I'll go first, I guess, I just, because that...thank you Kelly, for that. That is something that my colleagues on Staten Island, it was something I addressed early on with the LPC, plus the lack of designations. We actually went with New York One and highlighted this. It got a little movement because we've had many things pending for Request for Evaluation. And the LPC just is too slow to react and I, the one--the Conference House one--was touchy because it's private and professional, but the Audrey Lorde House was in the district.

I reminded them, that of the ten they designated, seven were already designated--this is citywide. And we, when we submit new landmarks for evaluation we really think about them--the ones that Linda and I've talked about on the South Shore, on the balance of the Island--these are ones that the Island doesn't have in the resource or catalog of protected sites. Theaters, hospital buildings, interiors, and buildings that have--and LPC is looking at that, ones with the Abolitionist Movement--so that is a frustration.

And the double dipping, we haven't...when we had a recent meeting with Landmarks, we brought this up and they said, 'Oh well, the Native American history...' and I politely said, 'That's great, but it was double protected.' The city through the Parks Department does, you know, very due diligence on not disturbing the site. So, it wasn't threatened with the parking lot, a basketball court, new houses, and that's really our problem that we've been trying to address. So, it's something we're continuing to work on. So, I'll answer that for now, thanks.

Kelly Carroll: Linda, Franco? Do you want to add anything to that?

Linda Hauck: I don't need to add anything to that. I think John said it well, especially about Conference House Park. We have to sit back and say to ourselves, what are we doing here? First of all, on Staten Island, there are so few organizations or individuals who speak up for designation of properties, and we had hoped that those few of us--especially the Preservation League of Staten Island--when they brought a property to the attention of Landmarks, that it might have some merit of you know, just based on the you know, the reputation of the organization. And that's proved not to be so.

And for instance, the Tottenville Historical Society two years ago brought two properties--important properties--to the attention of Landmarks. One having strong connections to an early 1800s African American family that moved here, relocated from Virginia. And we did the research on the property as much as we could. And a conversation with them just a few weeks ago, there's...absolutely nothing has been done. Nothing more has been learned, nothing more has been looked at. And so, we sit back and scratch our heads and say, what are we doing here? We're the advocates for these properties, this is part of what we have been called to do, to recognize and ask for consideration and nothing happens. Yet, they look at properties that are already protected and spend their time doing pointless...whatever.

John Kilcullen: And just to add, I know--I'm watching the time--you know, they also...when we present properties, and I think everyone on this call can appreciate this, 'Oh, it's been altered,' or this or that. And I will bring up time and time again a counter-pointed building. A counter building in the other outer boroughs. 'Oh, but...' Constantly. I said, but they're not being consistent. If you're going to do one thing, stay consistent.

In the case of theaters, we have no landmarked exterior theater. 'Oh, this building's altered.' I said, the one in Ridgewood Queens, in Coney Island and Upper Manhattan, all had the same gobbledygook--my professional word--altered beyond repair. And they say, 'Oh, it's been altered.' But the building I presented, the Tompkinsville Theater--if folks want to look, 120 Victory Boulevard--has the terracotta, it's in perfect condition, it says Tompkinsville Theater. It's ready-made and it's being adaptively reused. I mean, I can't stress how much we present things that are ready-made and we just get turned away and they look at things in the broader priorities. It is very frustrating. I know Kelly, you're going to talk about some of these, so I just bring that up again.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah, I'm glad you brought up the theater. I think that there are certain marks of civilization, right? Like, I think of even in the smallest towns that were developed in the 20th century, early nineteenth, you always have a church, a school, a synagogue or a theater, a library. We have these like specific spaces, right, that even smallest of towns have. And so, when you have an entire county or borough in New York City that cannot claim one theater, when there are many that I would argue are viable for landmarking...

John Kilcullen: Exactly.

Kelly Carroll: ...it is, it is a bit odd. And also just to touch on your comment specifically about the Tompkinsville Theater, you're absolutely right. The terracotta is in great condition, you know it is getting close to 100 years old, but it's crisp, it's legible. The building itself, I think, has sufficient integrity that conveys its original use as a theater, and it does have some infill replacement that reflects its changing use, but that infill is typical of any type of storefront infill that we see all over.

John Kilcullen: Exactly, and its counterparts in the other boroughs that were recently designated had the exact same infill. And you know, it's fun--I'm glad you said that. But we, Linda and I speak about this, and Franco. When Tompkinsville or any town on Staten Island was ascending, they went from wood buildings to masonry terracotta, they had money to spend. They...in the '20s and '30s and '40s they were going to their theaters. And I stress this to the Landmarks Commission, and in the case of the Tompkinsville Theater you can see when the building was built, surrounding it on all vintage photos are wood frame buildings that are no longer there, and here's a building that they wanted. So, every town had one. I know down by Jean in New Dorp, in that part of the Todt Hill-New Dorp area there was a theater there, so every town had a theater that you could walk to.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah.

John Kilcullen: So, it belies logic why they're saying 'Oh!' and they look at...and again, Staten Island stayed rural up until 1960, really, in the sense of when the bridge opened. So, the North Shore was developed, there was a ferry service, there were no interstate bridges until the '30s, any interborough bridge was not until 1960. So, they have this again, New York City mentality, one size fits all. And you know, it's again, I'm looking at the building behind you Kelly, it's ready-made, but there are a lot of buildings that are slightly altered, but still have as much beauty and historic fabric and architectural charm and significance that that one does, but that has clapboard on it. That you know, we can still have some vinyl, but still have the supporting elements in keeping it intact.

Kelly Carroll: Right, and I am a firm believer in that if something is designated, it can encourage the kind of sensitive restorations to bring buildings into this kind of shape that this house is behind me. And all those things are done with great care, and we do have many wood frames covered in siding that are in the Greenpoint Historic District, as an example.

So, to go back to these designations, I'm actually going to share my screen for a minute because I'm going to put a really old house up that you all will know, but our guests may not. And here's our bios. So, I'm going to put up this house, please be patient as I navigate.

Okay, so this was during the last batch of significant designations that occurred on Staten Island, starting in 2015, wrapping up in 2017. And I bring this house up, this is the Lakeman-Cortelyou-Taylor House. This house has a ton of evidence that points to its date of construction to be around 1683. We don't

have a lot of structures from the 1600s left in New York City. You know, I'm still always shocked when I see a 200 year old Federal house peeking out at me from beneath signage on Grand Street in Manhattan, and let alone something that's you know, even older by you know, a century. So, this house I think anywhere else would have been you know, axiomatically designated just for its age and its persistence in you know, what has obviously...we can see from the map here there's been a lot of subdivision, which is a big problem as we've heard for preservation for these houses.

So, this was designated by the Commission in 2016. They knew that there was going to be push back, but they felt that this house was so old and it had survived to this point. It also was calendared originally in 1966, so the original Landmarks Commission had this property on their priority list when the Landmarks Commission was a very young Commission. Despite that, because of owner opposition and Council opposition from Councilmember Matteo, who said that "Landmarking was an added burden" and the owner said that landmarking would prevent a viable operation of his business, this was actually rescinded and the property was turned back.

So, my question for the group is, how do we as preservationists change--and this is like a pie in the sky question--how do we shift this culture on Staten Island, both from a constituent and elected official standpoint, to convince people that getting landmarked is not a death knell for your property, for your investment, for your happiness? How do we, how do we change that so tragedies like the Lakeman-Cortelyou-Taylor House do not keep happening?

Franco Paolino: I would say that one of the main things is kind of education about the properties. If people don't understand what the house is, the history of the house, any special architectural features, there's not going to be an appreciation for it. And they still may not want landmarking, but I think if we do better in educating people about the history, the stories of these houses, what makes them unique, there's more--a lot more--of a likelihood of them wanting to protect it.

Kelly Carroll: Education is key, yep.

Linda Hauck: We've struggled with this and addressed it, talked about it, and just cannot seem to come up with an answer to that question. Yes, education is absolutely part of it, and the benefits of landmarking we know outweigh what will happen or can happen. But the general public has this mindset that you just cannot tell me what to do with my property, period. And they can't get over that enough to recognize the value of their building to the you know, the landscape of Staten Island. I don't...that's a tough question and I wish I had the answer. I just don't know how to address it. You know, we've done community discussions and of course, some folks get defensive and some folks want to learn, and it can be a challenge, so I don't know what the answer is. John?

John Kilcullen: And Linda, I think our recent conversation with Landmarks, I think as an agency, they like to say they're a regulatory agency, but they have lots of depth in their staff, as we all know. I think they, I think, with the public hearing landmarks, and then buildings that in the case of Staten Island, I know we're going to run out of time to talk about this-

Kelly Carroll: No, it's okay, we have some time.

John Kilcullen: Just, and what the buildings that are failing that...we've been advocating for the city-owned buildings for Landmarks to really try to move things along. I think there's this rigidity to LPC even in their talking. And when we talk to people, I talk to people, I say Landmarks doesn't mean the

building has to stay etched in time. Folks, I've had this time and time again, you can't touch a window, you can't change a doorknob, you can't change a light. You can change the light, you can change things. Not, you don't want to put pink siding on a building, but you can change the building. You can make changes. Talk to them.

I mean, look at the Gansevoort Market. I mean, Landmarks does not keep consistent. They will allow one thing in the moneyed areas of the city, but yet in other areas they are sticklers for the littlest thing. And I think it's...the message gets diluted. And they're not out here, and we've asked in the case of the Seaman's Retreat on Bay Street and Vanderbilt, we've said, how can we help you get adaptive reuse? 'Oh, we don't regulate use.' This building--and I have a follow up on this upper portico, there's graffiti because there's people getting in. We've said we'll help you work with the council people, Linda's resources.

And people would love this, this building overlooks New York Harbor. And they say, 'We don't regulate, we've been talking to the owners, we told him he's got a violation, he needs to maintain it.' And then that's where it goes. There's no real active activism for this building. Case in point, and I know Jean was involved with the Flagg Estate, they didn't allow the development--the sub development--which is great, but adaptive reuse that could benefit the community that works and be a little bit more flexible. And nothing ended up happening with the Flagg Estate.

But I fear like their conversation is 'Nope, can't do this, we have to follow the law,' without saying 'What can we do? We'll work with you.' I haven't seen that on Staten Island and you know, so many buildings are in litigation because you know, I know that you just had up the Lighthouse Depot building, if you go back to that one, Kelly. This is one that now has a tarp. This upper part had been tarped by the developer, and it ripped. Moisture is getting in, and now the developer who did it, the preservation architectural firm can no longer...they lost the contract, or their contract expired. So it's been sitting, and they've issued a violation, but here it just sits.

And then the adjacent buildings, which are on the National Register--and this goes back, I want to say where they're not looking at adding more. The other buildings are on the National Register, but LPC won't step in to even say, hey, you need to do something on this, just as a courtesy to say, 'we can't regulate it, but that outer wall could fall down and hurt someone.' Because no one's looking at it. The National Register has been no active, as you know, active oversight. So, I went on a long...but there are so many frustrating issues.

The Manee-Seguine down in the Tottenville area at Princess Bay, same thing. We won the law suit. They forced him to stabilize the building. Now it's sitting. And he's playing a game of you know, push comes to shove, I'm not going to do anything. You know, it had the big hole in the roof, now it's sitting. His plans are approved, he wants to sell it, just going to wait it out. And we have a landmark that has a big tarp, overgrown vegetation, and it's probably one of the top oldest buildings on Staten Island, if not the city.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah, so I'm glad you...we got to this, because this is definitely one thing I wanted to talk about tonight is...so, you have this...there's a culture problem, with people being fearful. And usually where there's fear there is also aggression. Aggression is usually is rooted in fear, and fear is usually because people are uncertain, right? And so all of this kind of feeds at each other, but at the same--concurrently, you do have properties that are landmarked, right?



And so, for instance, the building on my screen, the old Seaman's Retreat you know, this was Staten Island's first hospital. What a superlative to have. Of course it should be a landmark. It is a landmark. The physician's residence which is not pictured but is also a landmark as part of this property. And so you have these properties that are protected, but they're allowed to deteriorate like this, which is almost like an undermining of: if we do put this layer of protection on, is it actually enforced? Does it actually mean something?

And you know, there are example after example in the borough of landmarks that are, unfortunately, a little forlorn. And I was wondering like, what is the most recent update with this building? I know that you had caught people removing copper from the soffit on the middle pediment. You know, in this era in New York, where we're becoming reacquainted with our waterfronts, we're reclaiming our waterfronts, Staten Island has such roots in its seafaring past that you know, this building faces the water. What needs to be done to bring this landmark into our future, you know, what would...is it an ownership issue? What can we give people as an update tonight on this?

John Kilcullen: Ugh, thank you, Kelly. I'm sorry Linda, were you going to say something?

Linda Hauck: Go ahead, John.

John Kilcullen: We...the update, they've issued a violation, we had a meeting two weeks ago. They'd issued a violation, I guess it's a non-monetary, to say you need to secure the building. We brought up--when we had a meeting with the councilperson--how can we, as the Preservation League, the Tottenville Historical Society, other groups work with the Landmarks? Any other town would have a simple landmark committee to say how can we get someone in there that is looking for this? I think the square footage I'm not sure on it, but it's a very large building. They've talked about a school.

But in this case, it's on a large, adjacent, just off screen to the right is a large open area that is non-landmarked adjacent to this physician's house. I think there's a lot of redevelopment scenarios at play. They're hoping no one will notice. The building could fall, they claim hardship. The whole site is by transportation--the Clifton train station--and they're going to say you know, 'Oh, we can't do anything. Landmarks, can we take it off the designation?' This is where we actually stood in front of this building when we met with New York One to bring up the case of we had no Landmarks since 2016, and we still don't. And they give us, 'Oh, the priorities' and I get extremely frustrated with this. And we go through this all the time. I'm sorry was I muted during that?

Kelly Carroll: Just the last, just the last second.

John Kilcullen: Okay, sorry. There's no, they don't seem to want to work with the community, and we are, Linda's--and I know Linda is going to express this--we are like at our wits' end sometimes that we have no...where they're not really trying to stick the course. And other boroughs they just prevail and say we want this landmark. I've seen it, I've given them the...where they override or really stick with what the designation was and support it, so we are very frustrated when it comes to general preservation, because how can I, as President of the Preservation League say 'Hey, support this!' when this building, buildings in Tottenville, buildings in and around mid-Island are looking horrible? When, and they say 'Oh!' Look what happens, they don't do anything. You landmark your building, you don't have to do anything, and you let it fall down.

Franco Paolino: Yeah, I think we have a lot of cases of this where they're trying to do demolition through neglect, where like John said we're just going to leave it, and then it's just going to go down because we didn't do anything, and we'll get around landmarking. Also, when landmarking, there have been houses that have had the owner support for landmarking, and yet they won't landmark them. 49 Bard Avenue, which was a 1850s gatehouse...

John Kilcullen: Yes.

Franco Paolino: ...the Preservation League supported landmarking, and the owner asked for it to be landmarked...

John Kilcullen: Yes, thank you, right.

Franco Paolino: ...they did not want anything to happen to the house after they sold it. So, you had an owner begging for their house to be landmarked, an 1850s gatehouse. But it wasn't because they said the gatehouse had been altered and it--I wish I had a picture of the house--it's a beautiful house actually. And so, we have houses that have full support from the community, full support from the owner, but they're told no.

John Kilcullen: Thank you, Franco. We had one across the street and the owner was Edward Sergeant... submitted, they said 'Oh, it makes a better district designation.' The owners were 100% in favor of it.

(On screen, 557 Bard): this is another one we have pending. They like it, because it has the Abolitionist background, with an Elliot McKenzie. And one on Delafield not too far from there. But again, it's brick, it's not altered, it has the history, but yet as Franco just said, I knew the owner. She lived in the St. George District, bought that carriage house, restored it, wanted to protect it, and they said no. I mean, we had the Preservation [League] Barnett Shepherd--many of you know--you know, wrote a letter and they said no. And you go, how is that possible when the owner wants to landmark their building? They're saying, I want to take the burden of landmarking on knowing it may alter my resale value, but I believe in this. Happily, the building--the new owners, who I had a chance to speak to shortly after, they've not done anything to it--but there's always the threat of it, of it going sometime down the line.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah, it's interesting what you just said about how in Staten Island--and I've spoken to Jean Prabhu about this, too--that owners there's a...it's just affecting resale value means a bad thing. Which is so interesting because especially let's just...no, basically every other borough, because the Bronx is gaining landmarks a lot more of these days--your landmark status actually increases your resale value, and that was a selling point, even in--no pun intended--down here in Bay Ridge, where there were initially some opposition, same mentality about 'don't tell me what to do.'

I think the difference here is that neighbors can see how collectively something looks better with its cohesion and it's in everyone's best interest for resale if you keep something looking a particular type of way, and I think that type of perspicacity is lost on Staten Island because you are dealing with individual parcels which, in our current real estate market, have a tremendous value to be divided up. And when you divide up, you not only lose the historic resource, but you lose a character defining feeling of that borough as a place that's more bucolic, and it's a problem.

John Kilcullen: I just wanted to add to what Franco had said. In addition, right behind the Seaman's Retreat is the original Bailey Seton 1930s building that was the first US health and hospital building. We

met with the councilperson, she supported it being looked at further. We brought it up again in our meeting and there hasn't—'Oh, there are still medical issues,' and she said, it's not a hospital, it's half empty. And when I brought this up and they had no answer and Linda jumping, and they looked at me like 'Oh, no we're still looking at it.' And she turned to them in the previous meeting and said how do I get this fast tracked?

Because it does not...the newer building that is behind the Seaman's Retreat is probably twice the size, has so much adaptive reuse, but again there's the speculation that it sits on the land that's so valuable. They tore three of the other doctors' hospital buildings down along Vanderbilt Avenue. And we write letters and we stand in front of the building and say this is Staten Island's first hospital--US hospital. It was sold to the city for \$1, and when they had the current councilwoman saying 'I'd like this landmarked,' she was saying, 'Yeah, totally, I was born there, it's a great building,' they've done nothing on it. So, frustrating. I go back to that.

Kelly Carroll: That "F" word.

Linda Hauck: Just, if I may, a quick mention about the mindset of Staten Islanders. And again, we'll go back to the opening of the bridge in the 1960s. Property values were pretty good out here. You could get land real cheap and if you were lucky, you had a house on it, and if it was a larger parcel or even vacant land, you could get pretty cheap too. And development really didn't start until after the '60s, and by the 1980s, that's when really large-scale development started. It did take about 20 years. So, those coming here in the '80s knew that they were coming to probably have their kids go through grammar school, or the school system, and then they had one foot out the door already.

So, they were thinking already when they got here, 'I'm going to live here for X number of years, and then I'm going to sell my house and I'm going to move to New Jersey or Pennsylvania.' And that trend has continued since the 1980s, and I think that had a great impact on people who come here and never really embraced the community or the preservation of their community, because they know they weren't going to be here long term. And that's, I think part of the like, the mindset of Staten Islanders in general. They don't embrace the history of their communities here.

Years ago, we had local history programs in the public school system and even in the Catholic schools and that's gone by the wayside, too. So, it's multifaceted what's happened here and why people do not embrace preservation. And unfortunately, the almighty dollar is part of that, and I don't really see that changing. I remember back in around 2005 I know there was talk about--I think HDC was looking into some kind of tax credits for landmark property owners. We had hoped there would be some kind of marketing of landmarks, an education program, some kind of funding available for landmark property owners, too. And I think if there was a package it would have helped a great deal, but nothing ever came to fruition on any of those points, so we're still swimming and sinking and drowning really, and I don't know what the answer is.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah, you're absolutely right that incentivizing this would help a lot, and the irony is that when you have an honorific designation of National Register, you can get tax credits, but when you have this regulatory binding designation of the local law, you don't. And there is a pathway to kind of layer those and get those tax credits, but it's still work. It's not just an automatic, it comes with the package and I totally agree with you.

You know, there's also an Art Deco, you know WPA-era hospital in Jersey City that's enormous that sat crumbling for years, and it is recently reopened as The Beacon, a residential complex. And when it was opened, it was the largest historic preservation tax credit completed in the United States. And if that had...if it weren't for those tax credits, those buildings would still either be rotting or worse, they would be gone. So, you know, there are there are tools, but they're not always working together.

And we are almost at time so I'm going to ask my last question is, is a fun game I like to play from time to time. Which is, if you had a magic landmark wand, what would you designate--emergency designate—tonight?

Linda Hauck: Hmm. I don't know about an emergency designation, but I would have a wish. Like my wish, if I had a magic wand, I would wish that the Landmarks Preservation Commission would decentralize, and I would wish that Staten Island and the other boroughs could make decisions for their own borough as opposed to having to go to the Landmarks Preservation Commission who really doesn't have a full understanding of what's important to us. Every borough is different, and I think we look at each and we look at properties differently, and I think they have to respect that and they don't.

Kelly Carroll: Great wish.

John Kilcullen: I would have right now, and I sent it to them, is the Paramount Theater. It's slated for demolition. Out of the blue, it came up. And we've had it submitted, they've looked at it, but again, you send them something to say it's threatened. They filed plans to build a business, it's now part of the Bay Street corridor. Barnett Shepherd included it as the history of the Bay Street corridor, which was an upzoning, and now they're going ahead with it because it wasn't protected because Landmarks said it lost a lot of it. But it had fabric in terms of it being the largest theater on Staten Island and some terracotta elements. It was you know, and before it lost many of the elements, it could have been landmarked. So, that would be an emergency landmark designation, and also wishing for monies to fix it up, but that would be mine at the moment.

Kelly Carroll: And it had a fantastic Art Deco interior as well.

John Kilcullen: Oh yeah, and it still has--the interior's still there. They were using it for film shoots and other things so you know, and the irony is the same with Bailey Seton, and they love the decrepit. Gotham was filming there like every year because it's this decrepit, it looks like what Gotham the TV series should look like decrepit New York, but...

Kelly Carroll: Right, the Arkham Asylum yeah, right. Franco?

Franco Paolino: You know what, it's hard to pick. There's so many on the Island that need to be landmarked, and 249 Bard is one of my favorites with the fieldstone. There's a house on Clove Road that was in the Vanderbilt family. I forget the exact part of the family, but that's not landmarked. I'd like to see that. I could go down the list. We'd be here all night, since to get anything landmarked around here...

John Kilcullen: And that one, it's a cottage, a Victorian cottage with diamond shaped windows. Just charming. And it has been submitted in the more recent-ish past. And again, they just don't see the need and at the time it was, the ownership was in question, so it would have been easier to move things in, you know. They need to strike while the iron is hot for buildings like that. If the ownership--not that

they're playing one over an owner--but if it's in flux, you could make the case to landmark it and then worry about the details on the other end.

Kelly Carroll: I always would joke that I would landmark every Catholic Church, just start a fight with the Diocese.

So, I want to thank, I want to thank you guys so much for your participation tonight. We could be here all night, you're absolutely right, Franco. But we do have to wrap it up. I'm going to hang back for a few minutes for questions. If you need to run, please run. If you feel like being gracious, you can also hang out for a few minutes, but I really want to thank you and the NYPAP team, and all of our guests tonight for joining us for our very last series, and I hope to see some folks next week and cheers to being in person and celebrating this wonderful program together.

Brad Vogel: Absolutely. And special thanks to you, Kelly, for moderating the series. It's been a fantastic look at preservation history in the relatively recent past, which I think is really helpful to get that captured. And a special thanks to our guests this evening for really sharing sort of the nitty gritty of preservation on Staten Island and letting people know how they can help and how they can perhaps change the course of preservation history in Staten Island, thank you all once again.

Linda Hauck: Thank you.

John Kilcullen: Thank you.