

Commission Ready to OK 7 Landmark Areas



The proposed historic district along W. 105th St., just off Elverside Drive, where both sides of the street are lined with turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts limestone townhouses.

Photo by Arthur Fomarenski

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is planning to approve by early summer most, if not all, of seven proposed historic districts, The Post has learned. The long-sought designations have been pending since 1970.

Three of the districts — Park Slope, Carroll Gardens and Boerum Hill — are in Brooklyn. The remaining four — Soho, Carnegie Hill, W. 76 St. and W. 105 St. are in Manhattan.

"The commission will be designating the pending historic districts at its April, May and June monthly meetings," Frank Gilbert, executive director of the commission, said yesterday. "We expect to have most of the pending districts designated

by the end of June or early July," he added, "but it is not certain if we will be finished with all of them before our 1973 hearings begin in July."

The seven historic districts, along with 86 individual proposed landmarks, were the subject of public hearings in 1970—some had been heard even earlier—but designation decisions had been left in abeyance since the commission in December, 1970, declared a moratorium on further designations.

At that time, the commission maintained that its staff and budget were already inadequate to administer the 300 individual landmarks and 18 historic districts it had designated

since the landmarks law was enacted in 1965.

Neither a designated landmark building nor any structure within a designated historic district may be demolished or externally altered without approval of the the Commission. All proposed alterations or demolitions must come before a public hearing before the commission approves or denies permission.

The seven districts still pending, representing a diverse assortment of New York neighborhoods, are:

¶Soho, the lower Manhattan community that comfortably accommodates light manufacturing, artists' work and residential

Continued on Page 15

Landmarks Near OK

Continued From Page 4

lofts. This is the well-known east iron district, considered the largest remaining concentration in the country of a unique American architectural form. It will be the city's first commercial district designated a landmark.

¶ W. 105 St. off Riverside Drive, expected to be designated at the commission's April 19th meeting, will be the West Side's first historic district. Originally planned as the Bloomingdale District in honor of the name once carried by Broadway, it will probably be known instead as the Janes-Leo District after the two architects who designed most of the block's Beaux Arts limestone town-houses.

¶ Park Slope, the area immediately west of Prospect Park, boasts of many well-preserved 19th century row houses and is focal point of the current brownstone revival movement.

¶ Carnegie Hill, the large and well-preserved area of late 19th century brownstones in the 90s between Park and Fifth Aves. It includes some of the finest mansions left in New York, such as those on 91 St. off Fifth Av. that once belonged to Andrew Carnegie, Otto Kahn and James A. Burden.

¶ W. 76 St., a small block of elegant, classical limestone town houses between Central Park W. and Columbus Av.

¶ Carroll Gardens, also one of Brooklyn's active

brownstone revival areas, is distinguished by the setbacks of its mid-19th century houses and by the cast iron porticos. Its boundaries are Hoyt, Smith, President and Carroll Sts.

¶ Boerum Hill, the third Brooklyn district, is characterized by continuous rows of modest 1850s brick houses and is bordered by Wyckoff, Pacific, Hoyt and Nevins Sts.

In January, a series of articles in The Post focused on the weaknesses of the 1965 landmarks law and on the widespread criticism of the landmark commission's apparent reluctance to make full use of the power, given it under the law. Since that time, the commission has been under pressure to designate more of the proposals left pending since 1970.

In the past, if a proposed landmark was not designated after one public hearing and before the next, it had to be reheard at a second hearing.

This time, however, Gilbert noted, new hearings may not be necessary if all the seven districts are not designated before the commission's 1973 hearings which will begin in July. This depends, he said, on what happens with the legislation now before the City Council that would strengthen the 1965 law. That legislation, among other things, would allow the commission to designate scenic and interior landmarks and would allow the commission to schedule public hearings at its own discretion. Under the current law, the commission is prohibited from holding hearings for 36 out of every 42 months.