

Hearing Set On Grace Buildings

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The Landmarks Preservation Commission will hold a special public hearing to consider designating as landmarks the two Gothic revival houses on Fourth Av. that Grace Church plans to demolish to build new school facilities.

In announcing the decision last night, commission chairman Beverly Moss Spatt said it in "no way suggests a pre-judgment. The purpose of the hearing is to allow for a public airing of the issue."

The hearing scheduled for March 22 at City Hall, will come as the movement to preserve the rare Gothic facades gathers new momentum. National and state preservation organizations urged saving the facades with building the new facilities behind them. And a coalition of civic groups — the Joint Emergency Committee to Save the Grace Church Houses—was organized last week to raise the necessary \$300,000.

Grace Church, at Broadway and 10th St., was built in 1843 and designated a landmark in March 1966. Although the Gothic row marked for demolition is not a designated landmark, it is considered by architectural historians as "the country's finest Gothic revival block-front in an urban location."

The church plans to replace part of the row with a two-story gymnasium that has long been needed by its elementary school.

The commission's decision to hold a public hearing was hailed as a "bold and unusual move" by those eager to save the houses.

"The commission is to be commended for acting swiftly," said Kent Barwick, executive director of the Municipal Arts Society. "It gives the public new confidence that the commission will respond to emergencies."