

New Landmark Law Is Passed

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

The City Council has given final approval to a major re-vamping of the city's 1965 landmarks preservation law.

The legislation, passed by the Council yesterday by a vote of 36 to 0 with one abstention, allows the Landmarks Commission for the first time to hold regular hearings to consider new proposals and permits designation of scenic and interior spaces.

At the same time, the commission drew criticism yesterday for not fully using the power it has had since its

creation in 1965.

"The commission is picking non-controversial things to consider for new designation while ignoring the ones that are most imminently in danger of being ruined," Rita Aid, chairman of West Side Planning Board 7, told a commission hearing considering new designation proposals.

Mrs. Aid was specifically referring to the commission's handling of designations on Manhattan's West Side. Her feelings, however, have been echoed by community leaders in other areas of the city.

At yesterday's City Hall hearing — the commission's third since July — five of the calendar's 18 items were on the West Side. Four of them, Mrs. Aid pointed out, were houses of worship and only the fifth — the Schinasi House, the last free-standing French chateau mansion, on Riverside Dr. at 107th St. — was on the list of urgent priorities submitted by the planning board to the commission last May.

Mrs. Aid cited among the planning board priorities: the Central Savings Bank, at 734 St. and Broadway — considered one of the city's finest examples of Italian Renaissance architecture — which together with the landmark Ansonia Hotel across Broadway forms a "Gateway to the West Side"; the Dorilton Apartments at Broadway and 71st St., a lavishly detailed building that is reportedly one of the few remaining

examples of the French Second Empire style, and the Riverside Historic District, a square block from 76th to 77th Sts., Riverside Dr. to West End Av., that includes the last full remaining undisturbed block of Beaux Arts townhouses on Riverside Dr.

Although Mrs. Aid's interest was specifically the West Side, commission critics in other areas cite an excessive interest by the commission in considering churches, government properties and assorted "safe" structures.

Included in some 40 proposals considered by the commission in three hearings since July have been: seven churches, three federal military properties, a bridge, a post office, a subway kiosk and a memorial arch. Of them, the Queensborough Bridge, the Soldiers and Sailors Monument and the Bowling Green subway kiosk have so far been designated.

In answer to Mrs. Aid's criticism, commission chairman Harmon H. Goldstone

noted that "we study all the proposals made to us but we have to place the urgency in a citywide perspective."

"We have recently designated our 23d historical district," Goldstone continued, referring to last week's designation of Brooklyn's Boerum Hill area. "This brings us close to 9000 properties in historic districts and no city has anything to match. In addition, we have before us requests for an additional 45 historic districts."

Among the sites considered for designation at the City Hall hearing were: the 1890s Brooklyn Gage and Tolner restaurant, 372 Fulton St.; the 1852 Italianate Strang House at 31-48 29th St. in Astoria; the Calvary Cemetery Gatehouse at Greenpoint Av. in Queens; Bronx Post Office, 560 Grand Concourse; Public Baths on Manhattan's E. 23d St. and an extension of the Frick Museum designation to include the E. 70th St. block-front between Fifth and Madison Aves.