

Flatbush Appeal: Support Town Hall

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ moved to a new facility three blocks away.

The head of the community fight to preserve the Flatbush Town Hall as a "living landmark" has appealed to the Flatbush Chamber of Commerce to reconsider its position in favor of the historic hall's demolition.

A 40-space parking lot is scheduled to replace the Town Hall. The red brick, towered structure of the same architectural vintage as the preserved Jefferson Market Courthouse in Greenwich Village — is one of Brooklyn's five national landmarks designated by the U.S. Dept. of Interior.

40 Spaces

The Chamber of Commerce has been in the forefront of the merchants' campaign for a parking lot on the Town Hall site.

Irving Choban, a Flatbush attorney who is president of the Committee to Preserve Flatbush Town Hall, told the businessmen: "These 40 parking spaces will not cure the ills of Flatbush or of the Flatbush Av. merchants. What Flatbush needs is an historic consciousness, a love of landmarks and a sense of community that will attract young families with purchasing power.

"Historic consciousness has been proven in Brooklyn Heights and elsewhere as a great motivator of civic pride," he said, noting that the businessmen in those areas had been part of that revitalization effort. "If you think," he added bluntly, the Chamber of Commerce can continue to be concerned solely with its own members and still survive, you are dead wrong."

The handsome Victorian hall at 35 Snyder Av., just off Flatbush Av., is part of a trilogy of history that includes the adjacent Erasmus Hall academy and the Dutch Reformed Church, both 18th century landmarks. All three have been designated landmarks by the state and federal governments but not by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Pole Station

The Town Hall was the center of civic and cultural life for the Town of Flatbush until 1894, when Flatbush was absorbed by the City of Brooklyn and the hall became a police station. It remained that until this year when the 67th Precinct

In July, 1969, the Board of Estimate Site Selection Board approved the site for a parking facility based on a Traffic Dept. study indicating it was needed. There is already a 120-space municipal lot adjacent to the Town Hall but the Traffic Dept. found it overcrowded.

However, a spokesman for the Traffic Dept. told The Post that a later survey, which followed the vacating of the site by the police, found the existing parking lot now underutilized. "It had been overcrowded only because of the precinct activity," the spokesman said.

For two years Choban has led the fight to save the building and his committee has developed elaborate plans to convert it into a taxpaying cultural and community center. It would have meeting rooms, a restaurant, craft shops as well as workshops and performances by a variety of art groups.

The preservation committee gathered more than 7000 supporting signatures from area residents and some 50 of them showed up for a public hearing in July by the Landmarks Commission, which is now considering designation of the Town Hall.

Dr. Ernest Zelnick, Chamber president, said following Choban's presentation that "it's very likely we will reconsider our position."