



## The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

1 Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor North New York NY 10007 TEL: 212-669-7700 FAX: 212-669-7960  
www.nyc.gov/landmarks



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**CONTACT:** Lisi de Bourbon  
212-669-7938

### **COMMISSION ADDS CROTONA POOL COMPLEX AND BATH HOUSE INTERIOR IN THE BRONX TO NEW YORK CITY'S GROWING COLLECTION OF LANDMARKS**

*Immense Complex, Nestled in Picturesque Crotona Park, Is Third of 11 WPA-Funded Swimming Pools Opened in the Summer of 1936 To Earn Landmark Status*

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously voted to designate the Crotona pool complex and bath house interior as a City landmark, calling the facility one of New York's greatest architectural feats of the Depression era. Along with the Sunnyside Gardens historic district designation, the Crotona decision brought the total number of buildings that received landmark status in fiscal year 2007 to 1,160, the highest number of designations achieved in a single year since 1990.

The complex stretches between East 172<sup>nd</sup> and East 174<sup>th</sup> streets on Fulton Avenue in the Bronx, and is set within the rock outcroppings of Crotona Park, which is comprised of 150 acres and was acquired by the City in 1888. The recreational center and pool was the seventh of the 11 huge pools that opened across New York City during the summer of 1936 under Mayor Fiorella H. LaGuardia and former Parks Commissioner Robert Moses to improve the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.



"Crotona and the other 10 tremendous WPA pool complexes were completed during a period of unprecedented public construction in the City's history," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney, adding that landmark designation currently is being weighed for the remaining pools. "Each facility is distinctive yet similar, as they shared many of the same components such as low-cost building materials and streamlined curvilinear forms. They were built in a great tradition of civic architecture that continues to this day in New York City."

"Crotona Pool is one of 11 massive public pools built during the WPA era that opened in the summer of 1936," said Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "Built as an art deco interpretation of a French castle, it is an enduring, living landmark that is now formally designated. With care it will continue to serve Bronx residents for decades to come."

The recreational center is distinguished, among other things, by a soaring, arched gateway featuring decorative brickwork at the top of an imposing stairway. The bath house interior features a series of arched buttresses that span the width of the space and locker rooms arranged as adjoining mirror images. The designations authorize the Commission to monitor changes to the exterior of the facility and the bath house interior.

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The center was designed by a young Parks Department staffer named Herbert Magoon, who also was the architect of the bath houses at Jones Beach. The swimming pool measures 330 feet long by 120 feet wide, and required more than a million gallons of water to fill.

It was the second largest pool constructed that summer, after Astoria Park Pool in Queens, which was designated as a New York City landmark last June. The Jackie

Robinson Play Center and interior of the Jackie Robinson Play Center Bath House in Manhattan were granted landmark status in April.

The other pools that remain under consideration by the Commission are McCarren Play Center, Betsy Head Play Center, Red Hook Play Center, Sunset Play Center and interior of the Sunset Play Center Bath House in Brooklyn; the Thomas Jefferson Play Center and Highbridge Play Center in Manhattan; and the Tompkinsville Play Center (aka Joseph H. Lyons Pool) and interior of the Tompkinsville Play Center Bath House on Staten Island.

When Moses became Parks Commissioner in 1934, there were only two outdoor pools in the City, one at Betsy Head in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, and the other at Faber Park on Staten Island. The new pools were funded by the Works Progress Administration, one of former President Franklin D. Roosevelt New Deal programs established to lift the United States out of the Great Depression.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is responsible for protecting and preserving New York City's architecturally, historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. Since its creation in 1965, LPC has granted landmark status to some 24,000 buildings, including 1,163 individual landmarks, 108 interior landmarks, nine scenic landmarks and 88 historic districts in all five boroughs. Under the law, the Commission must be comprised of at least three architects, a historian, a realtor, a planner or landscape architect, as well as a representative of each borough. There are 11 commissioners, all of whom are appointed by the Mayor for staggered three-year terms.