



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

1 Centre Street, 9th 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

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION ACHIEVES HIGHEST NUMBER OF FISCAL YEAR DESIGNATIONS IN NEARLY TWO DECADES WITH APPROVAL OF SUNNYSIDE GARDENS HISTORIC DISTRICT

1920s Queens Housing Development Selected for Its Distinctive Architecture, Planning and Social Ideals; Sunnyside Gardens Becomes City's 88th Historic District and Largest in Borough

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved landmark status for Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, creating the borough's largest historic district and bringing the total number of properties that earned landmark status during fiscal year 2007 to 1,160. This figure represents the highest number of sites designated in a single year since FY 1990, when 2,315 buildings received landmark status, only two of which were located outside of Manhattan. Of the structures designated this fiscal year, 1,114 are outside of Manhattan.

"The City of New York has reached a major milestone today with the addition of Sunnyside Gardens to its growing roster of historic districts and landmarks," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "We have brought the number of designations this fiscal year to heights we have not seen in nearly 20 years. This achievement, which comes at a time of tremendous growth and change in New York City, is the result of Mayor Bloomberg's commitment to preserving our architectural and historic treasures in every borough for future generations while moving the City forward."



city concept.

With 624 architecturally and culturally distinctive residential buildings, Sunnyside Gardens is significant as an example of affordable housing with generous amounts of open space. A low-rise, low-density collection of brick-faced buildings arranged around 12 courtyards, Sunnyside Gardens was constructed on 16 blocks between 1924 and 1928 in response to a severe shortage of well-constructed affordable housing in New York City after World War I. With buildings only covering roughly 28 percent of the land purchased for development, Sunnyside Gardens was the first American adaptation of Englishman Ebenezer Howard's garden

city concept. Designed by Henry Wright and Clarence Stein, a reform-minded architect who helped design Temple Emanu-El and St. Bartholomew's Church in Manhattan, the massive development sought to combine elements of rural and urban living.

More

“After months of working with community groups like the Sunnyside Gardens Preservation Alliance, Borough President Marshall, Council Member Gioia, Assembly Member Markey and other preservation groups, I am proud to announce that Sunnyside Gardens will now be protected for generations to come,” said Chairman Tierney. “Sunnyside Gardens proved that visually interesting, high-quality housing with generous amounts of open space could be built at a low cost. Queens is blessed with many other architectural treasures, and the agency is working closely with elected officials, residents and civic groups and to ensure that more of them receive landmark designation.”

Sunnyside Gardens is the first demonstration of the planning and architectural principles established by the Regional Planning Association of America, a New York City-based group of reform-minded architects, planners and others organized by Stein in 1923 to develop new solutions to overcrowded slums and related problems. The RPAA believed that high-quality, well-planned housing forms the basis of a strong community. To that end, the group generated new financing mechanisms and planning and design approaches at Sunnyside Gardens that were later replicated at its developments in Radburn, in New Jersey and Chatham Village in Pittsburgh.

When it was completed, Sunnyside Gardens provided apartments, single and multi-family houses for purchase or rent for more than 1,200 families, as well 6 acres of common gardens and a 31/2-acre park, the largest privately held park in the City. The district also includes the Phipps Garden Apartment buildings, two courtyard apartment buildings constructed 1931-32 and 1935 that are faced with decorative brick.

Many of Sunnyside’s original residents included mechanics, chauffeurs, municipal employees, tradesmen, teachers, and several writers. In the 1940s, it drew many families and artists, including such well-known figures as Perry Como, trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke, Judy Holliday and painter Raphael Soyer.

Prior to today’s vote by the Commission, Douglaston was the borough’s largest historic district, created in 1997 with 600 homes. The Jackson Heights Historic District, which was designated in 1993 with 538 structures, will now be the borough’s third largest district.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the mayoral agency 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 more than 24,000 buildings, including 1,161 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.