



Sarah Carroll
Chair

November 30, 2021

Kate Lemos McHale
Director of Research
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Matthew Spady
Upper Riverside Residents Alliance

1 Centre Street
9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Re: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Dear Mr. Spady:

(212) 669-7700 tel
(212) 669-7960 fax

Thank you for your request for evaluation (RFE) of a proposed Audubon Park Historic District Extension in Manhattan and for the detailed information you provided. We have carefully read the report you submitted and appreciate the considerable research that was done to support the request. Consistent with the agency's standard methodology for reviewing requests to evaluate proposed historic districts or extensions, Research department staff also conducted research and analysis to corroborate the information provided in your report and integrate it with our existing research and survey files, and carefully evaluated the area in the context of the Audubon Park Historic District and the broader neighborhood's development history.

According to criteria established by the Landmarks Law, a historic district must be a distinct section of the City, with a collection of buildings possessing architectural and historical significance, which has a coherent streetscape and a distinct sense of place, typically with intact historic character on both sides of the street. The buildings within the existing Audubon Park Historic District are architecturally significant apartment buildings constructed early in the 20th century through the early 1930s. While their styles and material palettes are varied, their consistent scale and massing, quality, and level of integrity creates a strong sense of place, especially along Riverside Drive and West 157th Street, where historic character is intact on both sides of the street. Many of the buildings are distinctive with their use of carved stone, rustication, and elaborate terra cotta, and remain highly intact.

In comparison, the proposed extension includes buildings representing a wide range of construction dates, types, heights and levels of architectural quality and integrity, including several of lesser architectural quality and intactness than what is found within the district. While the RFE makes a case the proposal would extend the range of development and social history represented by the existing district, in our evaluation the mixed character, quality, and integrity of the streetscapes in the proposed area cause it to fall short of the standards noted above.

The proposed extension consists of three primary areas: West 158th Street, Riverside Drive north of the existing district, and Riverside Drive West. Consistent with the agency's determination in response to your 2017 RFE for the row on West 158th Street, staff found

that while it represents an earlier period of row house development in the neighborhood, it is adjacent to and faces the rear facades of larger apartment buildings, resulting in a fragmented streetscape that lacks a coherent visual or historic context and sense of place. Riverside Drive contains a mix of residential building types, several of which were determined to be of lesser architectural quality than buildings within the existing historic district, and/or with more alterations. The apartment buildings on the east (north) side of Riverside Drive are separated visually and physically from those on the west (south) side by the area's topography, and share more in common architecturally and developmentally with the blocks to the north than they do with the existing historic district. Finally the larger, mid-to-late 20th century apartment complexes facing Riverside Drive West do not relate to the existing historic district or the proposed extension in terms of their architectural style, scale, massing, and physical orientation facing away from the district.

As a result of these factors, staff has determined that the proposed extension to the Audubon Park Historic District does not rise to the level of a historic district on its own, or as an extension based on the boundaries provided. Further study would be needed within the context of the residential neighborhood north and east of Riverside Drive to determine whether a larger historic district may merit consideration, and whether it could include portions of this proposed area. Such a study is only possible within the context of agency priorities in all five boroughs.

We thank you for your commitment to historic preservation and appreciate your interest in the work of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Lemos McHale". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kate Lemos McHale