

ATTACHMENT NO. 5

ARTICLE FROM *AM NEW YORK*
ON MAINTENANCE ISSUES
FOR NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS

Shells of their former selves

Landmarks endangered by neglect

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It's hard to imagine today that the eyesore at East 125th Street and Park Avenue once was one of Manhattan's most picturesque buildings.

Passersby now are more likely to fixate on the collapsed roof and missing bricks than the Queen Anne Style and Romanesque Revival architecture that gave the former Mount Morris Bank building its charm when it opened in the 1880s.

"They need to do something, either destroy it or repair it," said Alfred Harris, 50, a deacon who works two doors down from the city landmark, also known as the Corn Exchange Bank building, that has sat unoccupied and deteriorating in Harlem for the past 30 years.

While landmark designation is intended to protect historic or architecturally significant structures for future generations, dozens of neglected city landmarks or buildings in historic districts are in danger of being lost forever.

"Sometimes people get the wrong idea and think that buildings ... just last forever," said Alex Herrera, director of technical services for the New York Landmarks Conservancy, a preservation group. "Buildings need huge, huge amounts of money infused in them every year."

Owners often allow landmarks to fall into disrepair because they want to profit from redevelopment at the site, lack the financial means to maintain the buildings to city standards



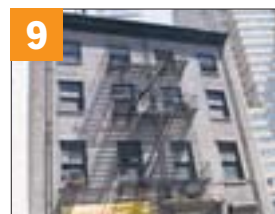
The former Corn Exchange Bank building at East 125th Street and Park Avenue has no roof and has remained vacant since the 1970s. (Photos by Katya Pronin unless otherwise noted)

or are elderly and find the repair process too daunting, preservationists and city officials said. In some cases, buildings were already decaying before being designated as landmarks.

Owners and attorneys of several derelict buildings contacted for this article did not return phone messages or declined to comment.

In recent years, neglect has claimed landmarks such as Smallpox Hospital on Roosevelt Island and New Brighton Village Hall on Staten Island.

The city's Landmarks Preservation Commission may fine owners up to \$5,000 for not maintaining their property. With the help of new city laws, the agency has been more aggressive in filing lawsuits in recent years, and the increased threat of litigation is forcing many other landlords to make repairs, said John Weiss, deputy counsel for the Landmarks Preservation Commission.



In May, a state Supreme Court justice issued an injunction ordering the owners of the Windermere, Manhattan's second oldest large apartment complex, to repair the 127-year-old crumbling landmark.

"It is a problem," Weiss

said of neglected properties. "But it has to be kept in context that we have over 25,000 buildings that are in historic districts or are individual landmarks, and ... only a handful are candidates for demolition-by-neglect litigation."

CRUMBLING HISTORY

Ten city landmarks or buildings in historic districts that have fallen into disrepair:

1 43 MacDougal St. Manhattan

The 1846 building is rumored to be a former mob hangout. Preservationists fear the vacant Greenwich Village site is falling into dangerous levels of neglect. The city is trying to locate the owner so that repairs can be made.

2 614 Courtlandt Ave. Bronx

With help from a city grant, the former saloon and meeting hall, which has stood since the 1870s and is covered in graffiti, is undergoing an \$800,000 interior and exterior restoration.

3 100 Clark St. Brooklyn

Fearing the complex, in the Brooklyn Heights historic district, could collapse, the city in May evacuated tenants and removed the top two floors from the five-story building. The owner has submitted a plan to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to stabilize the 1850s building.

4 Empire Stores 53-83 Water St., Brooklyn

Workers are stabilizing the vacant Civil War-era warehouses' arched windows and repairing a large crack on the building's northwest corner. There are currently no plans for use of the state-owned buildings, which overlook the waterfront Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park.

5 Windermere 400-06 W. 57th St., Manhattan

A judge ruled in May that the owners of one of Manhattan's oldest apartment complexes must bring the 127-year-old crumbling landmark into good repair.

6 RKO Keith's Theater 135-29 Northern Blvd., Queens

Only the lobby of the former movie palace in Flushing is a designated landmark. Its current owner planned to convert the site into a 16-story residential and commercial tower, with plans to restore the foyer, but has since put the 80-year-old building up for sale.

7 Bedell House 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island

A developer's 2005 plans to demolish the crumbling building and replace it with townhouses were foiled when the city later designated the 1869 structure a landmark. The developer put the building up for sale last September and filed a lawsuit against the city in March.

8 John Rohr Houses 502-506 Canal St., Manhattan

The red brick buildings have stood since 1826 and feature one of Manhattan's oldest storefronts. Today, they are vacant and covered in graffiti. Wooden windowsills are eroding, and plywood covers the window openings.

9 67 Greenwich St. Manhattan

The New York Landmarks Conservancy describes the 1811 structure as "the most endangered Federal-era building in lower Manhattan." In May, Syms department store bought the site, but says it is only trying to protect its adjacent flagship store from "encroachment" and has no plans to develop 67 Greenwich St.

10 Corn Exchange Bank Building 81-85 East 125th St., Manhattan

Promises in 1999 to restore the Harlem hulk, built in the 1880s, and convert it into a cooking school have not been fulfilled. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has referred the case to the city's law department.

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