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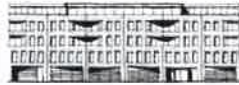
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Crown Heights

09/23/15 10:30am

Landmarks Rejects Proposal to Save Crown Heights' Oldest House

by Cate 6 Comments



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A rendering of the proposed restoration. Rendering via LPC

The Landmarks Preservation Commission Tuesday rejected a proposal to save Crown Heights' oldest home, the badly deteriorated and individually landmarked Elkins House at 1375 Dean Street. The proposal would have turned the freestanding wood frame home — the only one dating from when the area was rural — into an attached row house with side extensions made of glass, destroying its unique character, The Brooklyn Eagle reported.

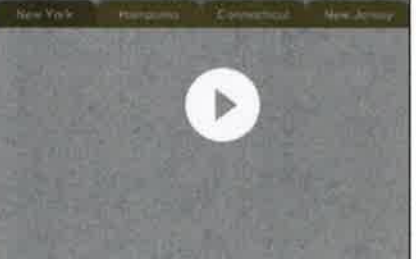
The owner of the house, Amber Mazor of Perfect Renovation, who has renovated other historic properties in the area, is caught between a rock and a hard place. For the project to be economically feasible, he must convert the house into at least four units, he told the LPC.

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The badly deteriorated landmark in 2014. Photo by Rebecca Baird-Remba for Brownstoner

But modern city zoning requirements clash with Landmarks: Zoning rules say side yards must be at least eight feet wide — or there must be no side yards at all. And because Mazor is converting the number of units, he is required to adhere to current code.

"This house has no future as a two-family house," the Eagle quoted Mazor as saying. "It is too big. It is too complicated."

He also told the officials at the hearing: "I am at the end of my rope financially."

But there is hope. Because of the Landmarks requirements, it's likely Mazor can get a variance from the Board of Standards and Appeals, so he can leave the sides of the house unchanged. LPC Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan should know — she used to be head of the city agency. She instructed Mazor and architect Richard Goodstein of Crown Heights-based NC2 Architecture to request a variance from the board.

Presentation materials for the proposed renovation of the Elkins house can be seen on the [LPC website](#). The house is a "transitional Greek Revival-Italianate freestanding house built circa 1855-69," according to the LPC. The proposal is to create additions on the roof, in the side yards, and rear yard.

Mazor had initially planned to convert the property into five condos and restore the exterior to its 1939 tax photo condition, including the balcony, windows and doors, as we have reported.

The Elkins house has been deteriorating since the early 1980s, and it has been vandalized. The previous owner, Real Properties, paid \$194,000 for it in 2011 and promised to restore the exterior and convert it to apartments. That never happened. Instead, the firm gutted what was left of the interior and was sanctioned by Community Board 8 for "demo by neglect" when gaping holes appeared in the roof. Then the firm put it on the market for \$1,100,000.

Mazor bought it together with a property across the street at 1372 Dean Street under an LLC for \$1,320,000 in 2013.

The Elkins house is "essentially a ruin right now," architect Goodstein told Community Board 8 last year.

[Source: [Eagle](#)]

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The house as it appeared in the 1980s. Tax photo via PropertyShark

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Bob Marvin

September 23, 2015 at 11:14 am

I suspect that a variance allowing the narrow side yards will be granted, which would be the best outcome, but, if it isn't, are those glass extensions REALLY worse than continuing to let this building deteriorate?

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adam_dahill

September 23, 2015 at 12:05 pm

I kinda like the glass extensions. They are keeping the spirit of the main house and they look set back. I walk my dogs past this house all the time and it's in really rough shape. They need to something fast or it will need to be torn down.

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NeoGrec

September 23, 2015 at 12:17 pm

I agree with Bob and Adam. It would be shortsighted indeed to let this building collapse because LPC can't agree to a compromise (the variance). On the other hand, wouldn't two units suit today's deep-pocketed buyers in what is such an up-and-coming neighborhood?

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miaspahnagain

September 23, 2015 at 2:37 pm

"For the project to be economically feasible"

It would be feasible if the previous owner was charged the cost of repairing what he demolished by neglect – it should have been taken out of the sale price.

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CGar

September 23, 2015 at 5:04 pm

I, too, agree with Bob and Adam. (Hello, Gentlemen.) Let's hope LPC doesn't throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water.

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modernlover

September 24, 2015 at 7:58 am

People, bsa will grant a waiver. The applicant had to have known this but probably didn't want to deal with it. Lpc is absolutely correct in pushing them to keep this house a freestanding wood house.

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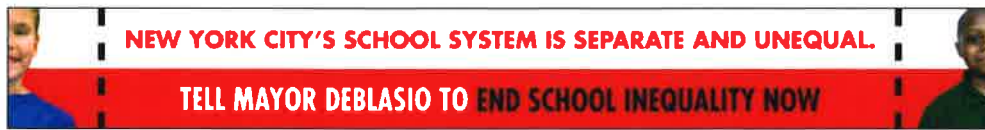
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Landmarks Preservation Commission says No to redesign plan for decaying Crown Heights 'country house'



This renovation plan for 1375 Dean St. is unacceptable to the Landmarks Preservation Commission because of the glass wall extensions on the sides of the house. Photo montage by NC2 Architecture via the Landmarks Preservation Commission

By Lore Croghan
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Will the sad little landmark with the big price tag ever be repaired?

The city Landmarks Preservation Commission said No Tuesday to a redesign plan that would have turned 1375 Dean St., which is the only free-standing mid-19th-Century wooden country house in northwestern Crown Heights, into a building that wouldn't be free-standing anymore.

At a public hearing at the LPC's Lower Manhattan headquarters about the George B. and Susan Elkins House, Richard Goodstein of NC2 Architecture presented remodeling plans with glass wall extensions on the sides of the

A real estate advertisement featuring a photo of a house and a woman. The text reads: "NEW YORK CITY'S SCHOOL SYSTEM IS SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL. TELL MAYOR DE BLASIO TO END SCHOOL INEQUALITY NOW". Below this, it says "LORETTA RAPISARDI SELECT SOUTHERN WESTCHESTER & WATERFRONT PROPERTIES". At the bottom, it says "Harrison, NY | MLS: 4508952" and "Licensed Associate Real Estate Broker 914-522-5347 | Lorettarapisardi.com".

building that would extend the full width of the property's five-foot side yards.

City zoning regulations require that the side yards be obliterated, Goodstein explained to commissioners, because the two-family house is being converted into a four-unit building.

Under zoning rules, there must either be eight-foot-wide side yards or "zero" side yards, Goodstein said.

Several commissioners worried that the proposed design would destroy the essential character of the Greek Revival-Italianate house, which was constructed between 1855 and 1869.



Landmarked 1375 Dean St. is in "very bad shape," according to owner Amber Mazor. Eagle photo by Lore Croghan

In voicing his objections to the glass wall extensions, Commissioner Michael Devonshire said the architect's presentation of the renovation plans called to mind an expression often used during the Vietnam War: "Sometimes you have to destroy the village to save it."

LPC Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan instructed Goodstein and Elkins House's owner Amber Mazor to speak to the city Board of Standards and Appeals about getting a variance allowing them to leave the five-foot side yards intact while converting the house to four residential units.

Mazor bought the decrepit house through an LLC for \$995,000 in October 2014, city Finance Department records indicate.

He wants to transform the interior of the house into a pair of two-family townhouses — a configuration recommended to him by an examiner at the city Buildings Department.

Mazor's original plan, which Community Board 8's Land Use Committee approved last November, was to do a five-unit condo conversion, Brownstoner.com previously reported.

At Tuesday's hearing, Mazor told commissioners that because of the economics of renovating 1375 Dean St., he needs to create four residential units at minimum.

"This house has no future as a two-family house," Mazor said. "It is too big. It is too complicated."

He also told commissioners, "I am at the end of my rope financially."

The deteriorating house has the distinction of having been designated as an individual city landmark in an emergency LPC session — which took place hours before bulldozers were supposed to start tearing the place down.

In announcing the 2006 designation, the LPC's then-Chairman Robert Tierney said, "The house represents the neighborhood's transition from a farming community to an urban enclave, and has a wonderful story to tell about New York City's history."

September 22, 2015 - 2:03pm



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