



July 30, 2012

Statement in Support of the Landmarks Law

Before I became a real estate professional in 2004, I helped spearhead the 1993 designation of the Jackson Heights Historic District. I also wrote the history of the neighborhood that was published in 1990. I believed then, and I believe even more strongly today, that Landmarking, and the creation of Historic Districts, is crucial to New York City's desirability as a place to call home. Without them, solid tax-paying residents are subject to the aesthetic and development whims of property owners who consider historic buildings and the land they occupy as an easy route to personal financial gain, with little if any concern to the impact their actions have on their neighbors.

In my over eight years in real estate in Jackson Heights, I have had far more customers request that the house or apartment they are seeking to buy be located within the boundaries of the Jackson Heights Historic District, regulations and all, than be outside it with no Landmarks protection. The simple reason is that they don't want their investment devalued by their neighbors' out-of-character "improvements" or out-of-scale developments. People - or at least most of the buyers I have done business with - want to live in historic districts because of the "aesthetic insurance" that the Landmarks Law provides.

Landmarking has been good for the real estate business in Jackson Heights, and not just for real estate brokers. I prepare a quarterly report of all residential real estate transactions in our zip code (11372). Going back to 2003 (when cooperative apartment data was first disclosed), apartments and houses within our historic district have sold at higher prices than those outside it. So property owners within the Jackson Heights Historic District have benefited from Landmarking just as much as the brokers who assist them with the sale.

There is more than enough developable land and properties within the boundaries of the five boroughs to keep everyone - current and future residents and developers - happy. Those entities who believe the Landmarks Law to be too restrictive are allowing their self interest to get in the way of the common good.

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