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RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND NOT TO DEMOLISH THE WOMEN'S PAVILION AT HARLEM HOSPITAL CENTER

WHEREAS The Harlem Hospital Center's current Campus Modernization Project includes the demolition of the seven-story 138,000 gross square-foot Women's Pavilion located at 22 West 137th Street (completed in 1935); and

WHEREAS The Modernization Project has already resulted in the demolition of the Hospital's Old Nurse Residence and New Nurse Residence. The Hospital's recent Campus Modernization Project included the demolition of two of these buildings, the Pediatrics building and the New Nurses' Residence, with construction of the new six-story Mural Pavilion, which opened in October, 2012; and

WHEREAS On September 20th, 1958, Izola Ware Curry, a 42-year-old mentally disturbed woman, stabbed Martin Luther King, Jr., while he signed copies of his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, at Blumstein's Department Store in Harlem, New York. Curry approached King with a seven-inch steel letter opener and drove the blade into the upper left side of his chest. King was rushed to Harlem Hospital, where he underwent more than two hours of surgery to repair the wound. Doctors operating on the 29-year-old civil rights leader said: "Had Dr. King sneezed or coughed, the weapon would have penetrated the aorta.... He was just a sneeze away from death"; and

WHEREAS The hospital has been recognized for critical operations and notable physicians. In 1958, Martin Luther King Jr., survived an emergency thoracotomy at Harlem Hospital following his near-fatal stabbing, while visiting Harlem, an event referenced in his final 1968 public address, "I Have Been to the Mountaintop", saving the life of the civil rights icon; and

WHEREAS Harlem Hospital Center has also been in the forefront of training African American Nurses. The Harlem Hospital School of Nursing School was opened in January, 1923, because of refusal of the City Hospitals to accept Black Nurses. The school continued to train nurses until its closing in June, 1977. Dr. John Cordice and Dr. Aubre Maynard, master heart surgeons, used the cutting edge thoracic surgical procedure developed by Dr. Maynard, to save Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life in 1958, when the civil rights activist suffered a stab wound to the chest while visiting Harlem; and

WHEREAS Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a well-known civil rights activist who had a great deal of influence on American society in the 1950s and 1960s. His strong belief in nonviolent protest helped set the tone of the movement. Boycotts, protests and marches were eventually effective, and much legislation was passed against racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS Dr. King worked toward social justice, civil liberties, and equal rights for all. His actions, including civil disobedience and passive resistance, led to widely known legal achievements such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS The In response to the growing concerns of the Community regarding preserving Harlem's rich heritage, Community Board 10's Land Use and Landmarks Committee developed a comprehensive planning document that explores various methods in preserving historic buildings and the built context of the District; and

WHEREAS At a regularly scheduled General Board Meeting on May 2nd, 2012, Manhattan Community Board 10 unanimously voted to approve the Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan; and

WHEREAS This planning document outlines the purpose, the context, and the benefits of designation. Acknowledging that Harlem as a District is under-designated, the goal of this planning document is to ensure new developments are consistent in vernacular and scale and existing buildings are protected. The recommendations put forth in this report represent a collective vision of the community. This report identifies proposals of four distinct landmark designations: individual, interior, scenic, and historic districts. It also includes recommendation for future contextual re-zonings; and

WHEREAS the recent and tragic loss of the Olga Hotel located at 695 Lenox Ave, a modest yet remarkably important building in Central Harlem. It was built in 1902 as the North-End Hotel for brewer Jacob Rupert, based on designs by Neville & Bagge. From 1918 to 1937, the Hotel Olga served as Harlem's leading lodging for African Americans, who were excluded from the Hotel Theresa and other places. The Olga Hotel was the premier hotel for African-Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. The Hotel Olga was cited in the Manhattan Community Board 10 2012 Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan. Hotel Olga was demolished in 2021 as a part of the proposed One 45 Project which is now undergoing the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP); and

WHEREAS The famous Renaissance Ballroom formerly located at 2341–2349 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, on the east-side of the boulevard between 137th and 138th Streets opened in 1924, closed in 1979 and was demolished amidst protest in 2015; and

WHEREAS The Renaissance Theatre Building, as it was originally named, opened January 1921. It was built and owned, until 1931, by African Americans. It was known as the "Rennie" and was an upscale reception hall. The "Renny" held prize fights, dance marathons, film screenings, concerts, and stage acts. It was also a meeting place for social clubs and political organizations in Harlem; and

WHEREAS Patrons of the Renaissance gathered to dance the popular dances at the time, the Charleston, Lindy Hop, and Black Bottom, to live music performed by jazz musician greats. Jazz artists such as Louis Armstrong, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Lionel Hampton, Cootie Williams, Bessie Smith, Lena Horne, Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald performed at the "Renny". In the 1920s the Renaissance Ballroom was known as a "Black Mecca". It hosted Joe Louis fights; and

WHEREAS The ballroom was on the second floor of the entertainment complex. The "Renny" was a significant entertainment center during the Harlem Renaissance, and the New Negro Movement in Harlem. When African American culture and art flourished. historically important structure helped usher in the decade-long period of African American cultural and artistic flourishing, which at the time was known as the New Negro Movement. William H. Roach from Antigua, Cleophus Charity and Joseph H. Sweeney from Montserrat were the founding builders of the Renaissance Complex. They were members of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); and

WHEREAS **National Register Historic Districts** are defined geographical areas consisting of contributing and non-contributing properties. Some properties are added automatically to the National Register when they become administered by the National Park Service. These include National Historic Landmarks (NHL), National Historic Sites (NHS), National Historical Parks, National Military Parks, National Memorials and some National Monuments. (Federal properties can be proclaimed National Monuments under the Antiquities Act because of either their historical or natural significance. They are managed by multiple agencies. Only monuments that are historic in character and managed by the National Park Service are listed administratively in the National Register); and

WHEREAS Harlem heritage is under threat through the destruction of these historic buildings, in effect erasing the history of African American achievement in Harlem; and

WHEREAS Central Harlem is a place of importance that is equal in terms of black history as Paris and Rome is to white history"; and

WHEREAS The Harlem Renaissance (also known as the New Negro Movement) was the most important event in twentieth-century African American intellectual and cultural life. While best known for its literature, it touched every aspect of African American literary and artistic creativity from the end of World War I through the Great Depression. Literature, critical writing, music, theater, musical theater, and the visual arts were transformed by this movement; it also affected politics, social development, and almost every aspect of the African American experience from the mid-1920s through the mid-1930s; and

WHEREAS Traditionally, the Harlem Renaissance is viewed primarily as a literary movement centered in Harlem and growing out of the black migration and the emergence of Harlem as the premier black metropolis in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Harlem Hospital in support of its Harlem Hospital Center Modernization Project (2005); and WHEREAS, such FEIS included a Study of Reasonable Alternatives to the Demolition of the Women's Pavilion (Study); and

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WHEREAS, on Page Three of such Study it states that there is a need for the replacement of the Women's Pavilion, however, on Page Ten, it is acknowledged that Harlem Hospital, Health and Hospital Corporation and DASNY have not done cost benefit studies to see the feasibility to repurpose the building for a variety of non hospital uses, such as the Public Health Lab; and

WHEREAS, as part of the Study, DASNY offered a letter from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (SHPO) dated July 1, 2005 (Page 11); and

WHEREAS, such letter stated that any demolition or substantial alteration to the Women's Pavilion would likely result in an Adverse Impact determination from SHPO and any demolition of a National Register Eligible building such as the Women's Pavilion is an action that can only be moved forward after a thorough exploration of alternative sites for any such projects, treatments and/or plans; and

WHEREAS, in such letter's Statement of Significance (Pages 14-15) SHPO stated that the Women's Pavilion meets the National Register Criterion A in the areas of social, ethnic and health care history for its contributions to the Harlem Community in the 20th Century and meets Criterion C in architecture as a representative example of early 20th Century institutional design with Renaissance inspired features; and

WHEREAS, such FEIS primarily dealt with erecting a garage and a garage is no longer a part of the Harlem Hospital Modernization Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Harlem Hospital, Health and Hospital Corporation, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and other government actors/entities desire to build a public health lab in the space of the Women's Pavilion; and

WHEREAS, 450 Million dollars has recently been obtained for the Public Health Laboratory; and

WHEREAS, a sincere attempt to avoid an Adverse Impact to the Women's Pavilion would be in alignment with SHPO's initial objective which stated in part that any demolition of a National Register Eligible building such as the Women's Pavilion is an action that can only be moved forward after a thorough exploration of alternative treatments and/or plans; and

WHEREAS, Community Board 10 desires that the City of New York and such other agencies/departments keep the outer shell of the Women's Pavilion because of its historical and architectural significance and repurpose the building; and

WHEREAS, Community Board 10 deems the Women's Pavilion to be an historical and architectural gem and there is no other city owned building in Community Board 10 that can match same; and

WHEREAS, Community Board 10 does not accept for the sake of maintaining an award winning architectural design of a new Public Health Lab at the Women's Pavilion site as a reason why such purpose cannot be achieved; and

THEREFORE NOW BE IT RESOLVED that Manhattan Community Board 10 does not support the demolition of the Harlem Hospital Center Women's Pavilion and strongly recommends its preservation, through restoration, as an historic building integral to the legacy of Harlem heritage and African American achievement in Central Harlem.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED Manhattan Community Board 10 APPROVED the RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND NOT TO DEMOLISH THE WOMEN'S PAVILION AT HARLEM HOSPITAL CENTER during the February 2, 2022 General Board Meeting, the board voted 39 YES, 0 NO, 0 ABSTENTION, and 1 RECUSAL.