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CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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October 23, 2019

Commissioner Sarah Carroll  
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
David N. Dinkins Municipal Building  
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Proposed Hell's Kitchen Historic Districts**

Dear Commissioner Carroll,

In March 2019, Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) retained the services of Anthony W. Robins, of Thompson & Columbus, Inc., to undertake a thorough review of the architecture and history of Clinton/Hell's Kitchen with the goal of identifying potential historic districts to be proposed to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).

On September 17, 2019, a resulting report ("the Report") from this review was presented to the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee (CHKLU) of MCB4. The Report proposed two historic districts in the Clinton Hell's Kitchen neighborhood — a Hell's Kitchen Historic District and a Paddy's Market Historic District.

At its October 2, 2019, Full Board Meeting, MCB4 by 37 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, voted to commend Mr. Robins for his review and to enthusiastically recommend approval of the Report and submission to the LPC as part of MCB4's Request For Evaluation.

**Background**

Manhattan Community District 4 is made up of the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea neighborhoods, bound by 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 59<sup>th</sup> Street, from Sixth Avenue to the Hudson River below 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Eighth Avenue to the Hudson River above it. The southern portion of the District encompasses the Chelsea Historic District, West Chelsea Historic District, and a portion of the Ladies Mile Historic District. While the northern part of the MCD4 encompasses the Special Clinton and Special Hudson Yards Zonings Districts, in which residential buildings are

protected from demolition, no historic districts have been designated in this area. In fact, there are only a handful of designated New York City Landmarks in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen.

Since 2004, MCB4 has advocated for landmarking in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen. Alongside the West Side rezonings of Hudson Yards and West Chelsea in 2005, the West Chelsea Historic District was established. However, there was no companion action in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen.

In 2009, the Chair of MCB4's Landmark Taskforce, Ed Kirkland, surveyed each building in MCD4 by walking every block in the District. Photos were taken and buildings were catalogued to include in a potential Hell's Kitchen Historic District, or of noteworthy historic buildings for individual landmarking.

In that same year, landmarking was again brought up during rezoning of Western Rail Yards and West Clinton. In each of these zoning actions and their subsequent Environmental Impact Statements, Clinton/Hell's Kitchen was studied comprehensively. Many residential, institutional, and commercial resources in Clinton Hell's Kitchen were found to be eligible for State and National Register and New York City Landmark designations. Despite these findings resulting from the City of New York's own studies, the LPC did not pursue historic preservation in the area.

However, during the Garment Center rezoning in 2018, requests for landmarking in Clinton Hell's Kitchen were again raised. The City Council reached an agreement with the Mayor's Office during the rezoning to consider potential Historic Districts and Landmarks in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen portion of MCD4.

Additionally, in 2019 the Historic District Council selected the Hells Kitchen as one of their "Six to Celebrate" neighborhoods to advocate for the creation of an Historic District.

Given that commitment and community interest, the Board hired consultant Anthony W. Robins of Thompson & Columbus, Inc., who conducted a six-month, in-depth review of the architecture and history of Clinton/Hell's Kitchen to evaluate and propose potential historic district boundaries and individual landmarks in the neighborhood to the LPC. Tony Robins' review encompasses two phases. The first phase proposes historic districts in Clinton Hell's Kitchen. The second phase proposes individual landmarks in the area.

The Board is happy that the first phase of the study is complete, resulting in the Report presented at the September 17<sup>th</sup> CHKLU meeting. The Report finds that there are two distinct areas with potential for Historic Districts including a Hell's Kitchen Historic District that encompasses the historic core of the neighborhood made up of largely Pre-Civil War era buildings and the Paddy's Market Historic District which captures the essence of one of the best-known pushcart markets in Manhattan.

MCB4 has long been aware of the special nature of the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood, with its historic legacy of immigrant, social, labor, and artistic history. Waves of immigrants — Irish, Italian, German, Greek— and internal migrants— Native American, Puerto Rican, African American, Midwestern — have called it home. Social institutions, like Hartley House, have

played a critical part in furthering social legislation to improve the lives of New Yorkers. Artists of the stage and screen who have helped elevate American culture to world renown, have lived, and still live, in its confines close to the Broadway theaters. Hell's Kitchen is a neighborhood in Manhattan with an abundance of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century architecture, a fierce sense of community, and a distinct sense of place. The designation of Paddy's Market and Hell's Kitchen as historic districts will pay tribute to the distinct character of this historic New York City neighborhood and help preserve it for the benefit of generations to come.

### **Proposed Hell's Kitchen Historic District**

The Report's proposed Hell's Kitchen District generally encompasses the blocks from West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street to West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues (and portions of some of the same blocks between Ninth and Eighth Avenues). This area includes the most intact collection of rowhouses, tenements, and related buildings within the general Hell's Kitchen area and within New York City itself. For this reason, the Historic District Council included Hell's Kitchen in its 2019 class of *Six to Celebrate*, citing its "near-pristine historic streetscapes of rowhouses, tenement buildings, religious structures, and commercial architecture."

The Report's boundaries for this district are also very similar to those proposed by MCB4's Landmark Taskforce. The Report points out the area "most significantly constitutes a distinct section of the city." Once visitors cross west of Eighth Avenue, leaving the hotels, Broadway theaters, and large residential building to the east, they "know instantly when they have entered Hell's Kitchen."

The proposed Hell's Kitchen Historic District area includes buildings with a special character, and which represent several periods or styles of architecture different from surrounding areas. The proposed district includes 120 row houses, 180 "French Flats," and 300 tenement buildings, two stables, alongside notable public, industrial, business buildings.

### **Proposed Paddy's Market Historic District**

The proposed Paddy's Market District would consist of seven blockfronts on either side of Ninth Avenue between West 35<sup>th</sup> and West 40<sup>th</sup> Streets. The Report points out that the stretch of Ninth Avenue from West 38<sup>th</sup> to West 42<sup>nd</sup> Streets was home, for half a century, to one of the best-known pushcart markets in Manhattan, located beneath the Ninth Avenue Elevated (the "El"). Though officially closed in 1938, the Market persisted into early 2000's, with several legacy stores still purveying food to the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen community. The Report notes "in many cases their storefronts remain intact, even as they continue to house food stores and restaurants."

The District would include 51 buildings, most of them pre-law or old-law tenements dating from as early as 1868 to the late 1890s. "Given its long history, its place in New York City lore, and its survival in spirit along today's Ninth Avenue, Paddy's Market deserves Landmarks recognition.

## Conclusion

MCB4 has sought for years to get recognition not only for individual buildings but also for the remarkably intact built environment of the neighborhood. The Board hopes that the LPC will recognize the significance of both the architecture and history laid out in the Report of both proposed historic districts in the Clinton Hell's Kitchen neighborhood through their designation.

MCB4 would like to thank Anthony W. Robins and Thompson & Columbus, Inc. for this comprehensive and thorough report that illuminates the rich history of Clinton Hell's Kitchen. The Board is happy that the Report marks the completion of the first phase of review and looks forward to identifying potential individual landmarks within Clinton Hell's Kitchen in the second phase of this review, outside the boundaries of the two proposed historic districts.

Sincerely,



Burt Lazarin  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



Jean-Daniel Noland  
Chair  
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

Enclosure<sup>1</sup>

Cc: Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor  
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council  
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Jerry Nadler, U.S. Congress  
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate  
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly  
Hon. Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly  
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council  
Marisa Lago, Chair, City Planning Commission  
Raju Mann, Director of Land Use, NYC Council  
Edith Hsu-Chen, Manhattan Director, Department of City Planning  
Historic Districts Council

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<sup>1</sup> [Proposed Hell's Kitchen Historic District Report](#)