

AIA New York Chapter

The Founding Chapter of
The American Institute of Architects



22 February 2006

Hon. Amanda M. Burden, Chair
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, New York 10007-1216

re: Fieldston Historic District Designation

Dear Chair Burden:

On behalf of the AIA New York Chapter and its 4,000 architect and affiliate members, I would like to register support for the designation of Fieldston as an historic district and to urge the City Planning Commission to report that the historic district designation is not in conflict with zoning. We have communicated this position previously to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to members of City Council and to others concerned. In so doing we join with our colleagues in the AIA Bronx Chapter in saying that the issues addressed by this designation are not limited to the neighborhood, not limited to the borough, but are, in fact, citywide.

Defining, delineating and protecting districts that have a distinctive and irreplaceable historic character are responsibilities of our elected and appointed officials. For architects, such designation starts with the quality of the architecture and planning. Dwight James Baum was, and is, much appreciated by not only his clients and those who have been privileged to live in the structures he created, but also by his peers. He received the Gold Medal from the Architectural League in 1923 and a major award from my organization, the AIA, in 1932. Today his work is still very much admired by architects in the Bronx, in Manhattan, and around the world.

It should also be noted that the distinctive planning of Fieldston, its tree-lined curvilinear streets following the area's topography, its variety of lot sizes and architectural diversity – all the ideals of good planning are hallmarks of smart growth and sustainability promoted today and the indicators of a great historic district. For these reasons and others, Fieldston is an historic district.

Yours truly,

Fredric Bell, FAIA
Executive Director

cc: AIA Bronx Chapter

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