

Landmarks Preservation Commission says yes to Crown Heights 'country house' rescue plan



The Landmarks Preservation Commission okayed this remodeling plan for Crown Heights' decrepit 1375 Dean St. Photo montage by NC2 Architecture via the Landmarks Preservation Commission

By Lore Croghan
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Finally!

A historic Crown Heights house that came this close to being demolished a decade ago had its restoration plan greenlighted Tuesday by the city Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).

At a public meeting at the preservation agency's Lower Manhattan headquarters, commissioners decided by unanimous vote that revised remodeling plans for the George B. and Susan Elkins House at 1375 Dean St. passed muster, after earlier plans had failed to garner support this past September.

"It's been a very long journey,"

Amber Mazor, the developer who owns the house, told the Brooklyn Eagle after the vote. "I'm very excited and happy."

According to city Finance Department records, Mazor has owned the decrepit landmark through an LLC since October 2014, when he purchased it for \$995,000.

Now, having received the LPC's backing for his plan, he can save the Greek Revival-Italianate home, which is the only free-standing mid-19th Century wooden country house that still exists in northwest Crown Heights.



This is landmarked 1375 Dean St. as it now looks, pre-renovation. Eagle photo by Lore Croghan

"It's been an eyesore for a long time. It's time to stop the neglect and bring back the glory of this neglected jewel," Mazor said.

He told the Eagle he expects to start working on 1375 Dean's restoration in the spring. First he must obtain permits from the city Department of Buildings.

The house, constructed between 1855 and 1869, will be clad in Hardie boards, he said, which are fiber cement planks that look like clapboard. The clapboard look-alike will be light gray and window shutters will be dark gray.

Mazor said he is basing the restoration on photos taken in the 1940s.

An aside: Mazor recently completed the restoration of 1372 Dean St., an 1880s-vintage brick home that's right across the street from the George B. and Susan Elkins House. Condos at 1372 Dean went on the sale market.

But back to the subject of the wooden country house at 1375 Dean St.

The major bone of contention concerning renovation designer NC2 Architecture's original plan for the house, which was approved at a public hearing, was wall extensions made of glass that were to be built in the two tiny side yards.

Because Mazor intends to convert the two-family house into a four-unit residential building, the plan called for that the side yards be filled in — or enlarged, which is of course impossible.

At Tuesday's public meeting, LPC staffers said the city Board of Standards and Appeals had been asked to indicate that 1375 Dean was not a good candidate for a zoning variance. The Buildings Department said the house would have a hard time getting an exemption from the regulations.

So architect Richard Goodstein came up with a new design for the side yard wall extensions. The design called for dark-colored horizontal slats standing in front of faux-clapboard walls with windows.

The screens are a dark color to make them recede from view.

Prior to the vote, Commissioner Frederick Bland expressed frustration that other city agencies had not been involved on the issue of the side yard wall extensions.

"What's bugging me is that we do not have the ability to do the right thing by this house," he said.

In 2006, a previous owner was going to tear down the historic house. Finance Department representative Raymond Agoglia, who had just purchased the property for \$800,000.

Thanks to the efforts of the Crown Heights North Association, the LPC held an emergency session to consider designating the George B. and Susan Elkins House an individual city landmark. Its protected status put a stop to the demolition.

December 15, 2015 - 1:00pm

