



Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Association

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M E M O

To: Our Neighbors
Date: May 10, 2010

From: Neighborhood Association
Re: Fort Independence Historic District

It is no accident that the community we call home is a beautiful, scenic and historic place; it was by design! In the successful report nominating Jerome Park Reservoir to the State and National Register, the authors wrote this great description noting one of our many layers of history. *"It is clear that Olmsted's intent in providing neighborhoods like Kingsbridge Heights with narrow, curvilinear streets was to assure that they would maintain their residential character, discourage inappropriate development, and preserve their existing natural beauty."*

For more than two centuries, our area was witness to many levels of historical significance to the character and heritage of our nation, state and city. We have evidence that sometime before the late 1780 Revolutionary War Era, an Indian Village resting place is was located at the corner of Giles Place at Fort Independence Street. Later during the Revolutionary War, General Richard Montgomery led American troops defending Fort Independence, and chose our area as the site of the farm and home of General Richard Montgomery; he was our nation's first war martyr. As Olmstead was designing our street's pattern in the 1870s, plans for the construction of the Jerome Park Reservoir were presented. This was to be at the site of the Jerome Park Racetrack, where Winston Churchill's mother, Jenny Jerome grew up on a mansion on Villa Avenue. In the 1920's, the Sholom Aleichem Houses, one of the city's first experimental co-ops, was built at the corner of Giles Place and Sedgwick Avenue; it too is eligible for the State and National Register.

For these reasons and more, in January 2010, we re-submitted our 1997 and 2004 requests to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to determine if our neighborhood is eligible as an Historic District. Unlike other districts, we are not proposing a specific house or building; but rather the historic sense of our place and it's Olmstead street design. You can read the complete application online at: <http://www.fipna.org/2010/01/24/nyc-landmarks-preservation-commission/>

A Historic District is an area designated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission because it has a special character or a special historical or aesthetic interest which causes it to have a distinct "sense of place." Each historic district represents at least one period or style of architecture typical of one or more eras in the city's history. Historic districts may contain a variety of building types and styles from several different eras.

We need to document your opinion in order to move forward, or not. Please print your name and address on this letter and return it with your opinion for or against.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Check one: I am
_____ **FOR** or _____ **AGAINST** the
Fort Independence Historic District.

We will be making a presentation and answering questions at the **Meeting on Wednesday, May 19 at 7:30 pm at the Kingsbridge Heights Rehab Care Center.** Return the letter at the meeting, email it to us at fipna@fipna.org, or fax it to (888)763-8399. You can also sign up online at www.fipna.org

Thank you for your time and consideration.