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10 New York City Landmarks That Almost Weren't



TWA Flight Center, J.F.K. Airport. From Lehnartz/Ullstein bild via Getty Images.



To celebrate the 50th anniversary of New York's Landmarks Law, here are 10 that almost didn't make the cut.

BY KATHERINE LAGRAVE

The fair weather is here in New York, and the annual crush of tourists can already be spotted amid the city's 8.5 million residents, taking selfies in Grand Central, lounging around Bryant Park, and trying to somehow wrangle their way into a performance of *Hamilton* at the Public.

It's hard now to imagine that the fate of any of those beloved civic institutions might have ever been in jeopardy, but the idea is not that far-fetched. All three are certified landmarks—and protected as such by the city's Landmarks Law, which was passed on April 19, 1965—50 years ago on Sunday. Signed into effect after growing public concern over the destruction of buildings with architectural and historical significance—namely, **Penn Station**—the law cedes power to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to grant landmark status to the city's buildings and sites, and to regulate them once they've been designated. Once a site has been designated a landmark, any proposed changes must be approved by the commission down to the smallest details, such as patchwork to damaged sandstone on a historic brownstone. In this way the Landmarks Law and the cityscape it protects are the result of active citizens, intent on preserving the city's architectural and historical fabric. (Want to nominate a landmark? Just [follow these steps](#).)

"There is no other city in the United States that begins to approximate the accomplishments of New York City in preserving its past while making it viable for a vibrant future," says Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, chair of the **NYC Landmarks50 Alliance** and previously the city's longest-serving landmarks commissioner, from 1972 to 1987. "People don't come here to visit strip malls. They come here, among other things, to see our national treasures. To see and involve themselves in it."

The Landmarks Preservation Commission, or L.P.C., is the largest municipal preservation agency in the country. Working with a panel of 11 commissioners who have backgrounds in architecture, history, planning, and real estate—and are all appointed by the mayor—the L.P.C. has designated 1,347 individual landmarks, 117 interior landmarks, and 10 scenic landmarks within 114 historic districts and 20 historic district extensions in all five New York City boroughs. It most recently granted landmark status —by unanimous vote— to the Crown Heights North III Historic District, the third section of Crown Heights North to receive this designation in the past eight years.

Take a tour of of the city landmarks that almost didn't make the cut in the gallery below.