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THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

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FOR HISTORIC
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**VILLAGE
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FRIENDS
of the UPPER EAST SIDE

August 19, 2026

Hon. Zohran K. Mamdani
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10003

Hon. Tricia Shimamura
Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
The Arsenal, Central Park
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

**Re: Proposed demolition of the landmarked Tony Dapolito
Recreation Center, 1 Clarkson Street, Manhattan**

Dear Mayor Mamdani and Parks Commissioner Shimamura:

We write to oppose the continuing plans by the Parks Department to pursue demolition of the landmarked Tony Dapolito Recreation Center at 1 Clarkson Street, Manhattan. The rationale offered for doing so, that it would be “more efficient” than preserving the building, is deeply troubling, and has far-

reaching implications for the Parks Department's maintenance of its scores of other historic properties.

Since the Parks Department first announced in the summer of 2024 its intention to seek demolition of the beloved landmarked center, which has been shuttered since 2020, they have contended that it was impractical or infeasible to repair, preserve, and productively reuse the building for recreation purposes. Now with internal documents of the Parks Department revealing their own experts found the building could be repaired and even proposed plans to do so, a new and perhaps even more troubling rationale for demolishing the Dapolito Center has been presented: it would simply be easier than repairing and maintaining it.

This seems especially foolish given that the Tony Dapolito Center site must continue to provide locker rooms, changing stations, and other enclosed facilities connected to the adjacent outdoor pool. Even if one accepts the Parks Department's unsubstantiated assertion that it would be more expensive and less efficient to repair and locate other recreational facilities at the historic Tony Dapolito Center, rather than to simply move them all into a new building being constructed across the street at 388 Hudson Street, to claim that as justification to demolish a landmarked structure has broad and deeply disturbing implications.

The Parks Department is one of the largest owners of landmarked properties in New York City, with literally scores of landmarked buildings and structures within its portfolio it's responsible for maintaining. This includes the majority of its Manhattan recreation centers, many of which are as old as or older than the Dapolito Center, and like Dapolito were originally built as public bathhouses. Many of these have been updated and adapted to present-day needs and standards, as Dapolito can be. One could easily argue that many of the Parks Department's landmarked structures would be cheaper to demolish than repair or maintain, and that pure efficiency would call for their replacement. To allow the landmarked Tony Dapolito Recreation Center to be demolished on this basis would mean the same argument could be applied to any of these beloved structures, to which landmark designation was granted to ensure their preservation. It should be noted that all these designations took place as part of a robust public process, in which the Parks Department participated. The Department is now seeking to, in effect, post facto nullify that action.

For these reasons, we urge you to immediately change course, and put forward a plan to repair and reopen the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, as Mayor Mamdani pledged to do when running for office.

Sincerely,



Jay DiLorenzo, President
Preservation League of
New York State



Peg Breen, President
New York Landmarks
Conservancy



Frampton Tolbert, Exec. Dir.
Historic Districts Council



Andrew Berman
Executive Director
Village Preservation



Sean Khorsandi
Executive Director
Landmark West!



Nuha Ansari
Executive Director
Friends of the Upper East Side

Cc: Manhattan Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal
City Councilmember Carl Wilson
State Senator Brian Kavanagh
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Assemblymember Grace Lee
City Councilmember Christopher Marte
David Siffert
Community Board #2, Manhattan
Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown (SPRCD)