

AN ANALYSIS OF  
LANDMARKED PROPERTIES  
IN MANHATTAN

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PREPARED BY



# LANDMARKS ANALYSIS OF MANHATTAN PROPERTIES

**OVERVIEW:** An updated analysis of properties in Manhattan revealed that more than one in four properties is landmarked, significantly more than the one in ten properties figure that is commonly reported.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a look at the most significant numbers in Manhattan:

- 27.7% of properties in Manhattan are landmarked.
- 11,857 landmarked properties in Manhattan.
- 70% of properties in Community Districts 2 and 7 are landmarked.
- 93% of all landmarked properties in Manhattan are located in historic districts.
- 48 vacant lots and 50 parking lots representing approximately 2.6 million sq. ft. of development potential on landmarked properties in Manhattan.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- **PUBLIC POLICY:**

After a lengthy study and public debate, New York City was comprehensively rezoned by the Department of City Planning in 1961 based on the present and future needs of the City. Today, Historic District designations essentially function as large-scale rezonings, comprised of hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of properties without much consideration into how this affects issues that are vital to the City's long term growth and planning needs. A recent study released by the Center for Urban Real Estate finds that the City has not developed the zoning capacity to house an additional one-million new residents, and cites the "ambiguous application of historic landmarking" as an obstacle to utilizing surplus FAR.<sup>2</sup>

Too often Historic District designation effectively prohibits the full development potential of underdeveloped sites. For example, a proposal to build a 10-story addition on a 5-story building on East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street in the Upper East Side Historic District was denied by the LPC even though the development potential allowed the 10-story addition and there were fourteen and fifteen-story buildings adjacent to the site.<sup>3</sup> The Commission rejected the addition even though § 25-304 of the New York City Administrative Code explicitly states that "nothing contained in this chapter shall be construed as authorizing the commission, in acting with respect to any historic district or improvement therein, . . . to regulate or limit the height and bulk of buildings."

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<sup>1</sup> Cuozzo, Steve. "Landmark Backlash: Despite Mike's Good Effort." *New York Post*. June 7, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Keenan, Jesse, Chakrabarti, Vishaan. "NYC 2004: Housing the Next Million New Yorkers." The Center for Urban Real Estate (2013).

<sup>3</sup> "Commission Rejects 10-story Upper East Side Addition." *CityLand*. December 15, 2011.

Aside from historic properties, there are numerous cases where properties with no historic value like vacant lots, parking lots, and gas stations are included in the designation of a Historic District. For example, the BP gas station at West Houston and Lafayette streets was included in the designation of the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension, despite its lack of historic or architectural significance and that it could have easily been omitted since it was on the border of the district. By designating sites with no merit, Landmarks seeks to control the future bulk and look of buildings adjacent to historic properties and affords those seeking to oppose the creation of housing and/or jobs with the opportunity to block what would otherwise be as-of-right developments. Essentially, the landmarks law is being used as a sword instead of a shield as it was originally intended.

Additionally, Historic District designations make neighborhoods less affordable. As the ability to develop housing is constricted, housing prices increase.<sup>4</sup> This undercuts the City's efforts to provide affordable housing in every neighborhood of the City, and has the unintended effect of concentrating wealth. As an example, the Community Districts with the highest percentage of landmarked properties, CD7 (Upper West Side) and CD2 (Greenwich Village), have the highest household median incomes in the City.<sup>5</sup>

- **COST TO PROPERTY OWNERS:**

Landmarks designation adds another administrative and discretionary process that is time-consuming and costly for property owners. Permit applications that cannot be processed on a staff level at the LPC must be reviewed at several public hearings at the Community Boards and LPC. And unlike ULURP, there is no definitive timeline for a resolution by the LPC. It is not uncommon for an applicant to be asked several times to return to a public hearing with revised plans. In addition to increased carrying costs, applicants must pay for the services of an architect, and other consultants in some instances, to revise plans and present at hearings. Over the past few years, there have been several cases where a project has been delayed by public hearings that were drawn out over two years.

Exacerbating these problems is the growing inventory of landmarked properties. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has a staff of sixty employees to process various landmarks permits for over 34,000 buildings in the City. The number of permits that the LPC must process has increases annually as more buildings are designated. Consequently, the increase in the number of landmark permits adversely impacts the time and speed with which they are processed. According to the latest Mayor's Management Report, the delay in

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<sup>4</sup> Glaeser, Edward L.. "Preservation Follies: Excessive Landmarking Threatens to Make Manhattan a Refuge for the Rich." *City Journal* 20.2 (2010).

<sup>5</sup> Data Search Tool. Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. NYU. [datasearch.furmancenter.org](http://datasearch.furmancenter.org).

processing Certificates of No Effect, Expedited Certificates of No Effect, and Permits for Minor Work Issued in Ten Days has been steadily increasing in recent years.

In addition to the soft costs associated with processing the permits, there are added hard costs associated with complying with landmarks standards. While landmark designation is forever, many of these buildings, especially 1920's masonry construction and mid-century glass curtain wall construction, were never intended to last forever. Structural materials that were used at the time of construction present new physical problems that may be incompatible with contemporary practices, and play a considerable role in owners' decisions to upgrade a building. Inherent vice<sup>6</sup> in older buildings threatens a building's integrity and has the potential to destroy the economic basis of its use. Building materials for landmarked buildings, such as windows, can be 30% more expensive as regular windows.<sup>7</sup> And in some cases, the method for installation can require more extensive work that can triple the cost beyond what would be required in a standard window replacement. Landmarks affect sustainability efforts, as well. As aging landmarked buildings attempt to increase energy efficiency, it is becoming harder to find affordable fixtures that also comply with landmarks standards. LPC imposes regulations that are largely unsubsidized, and not all buildings have populations whose incomes can support the added cost of complying with landmark standards.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proliferation of Historic District and individual landmark designations throughout the City imposes real costs to property owners, limits the City's ability to grow, and will have adverse impacts on housing, tax revenue, and job creation. In order to plan for the City's long term needs, a better balance must be struck between the needs of growth and preservation.

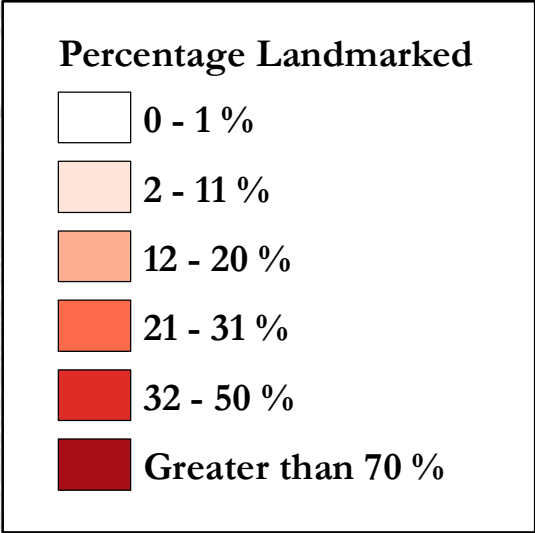
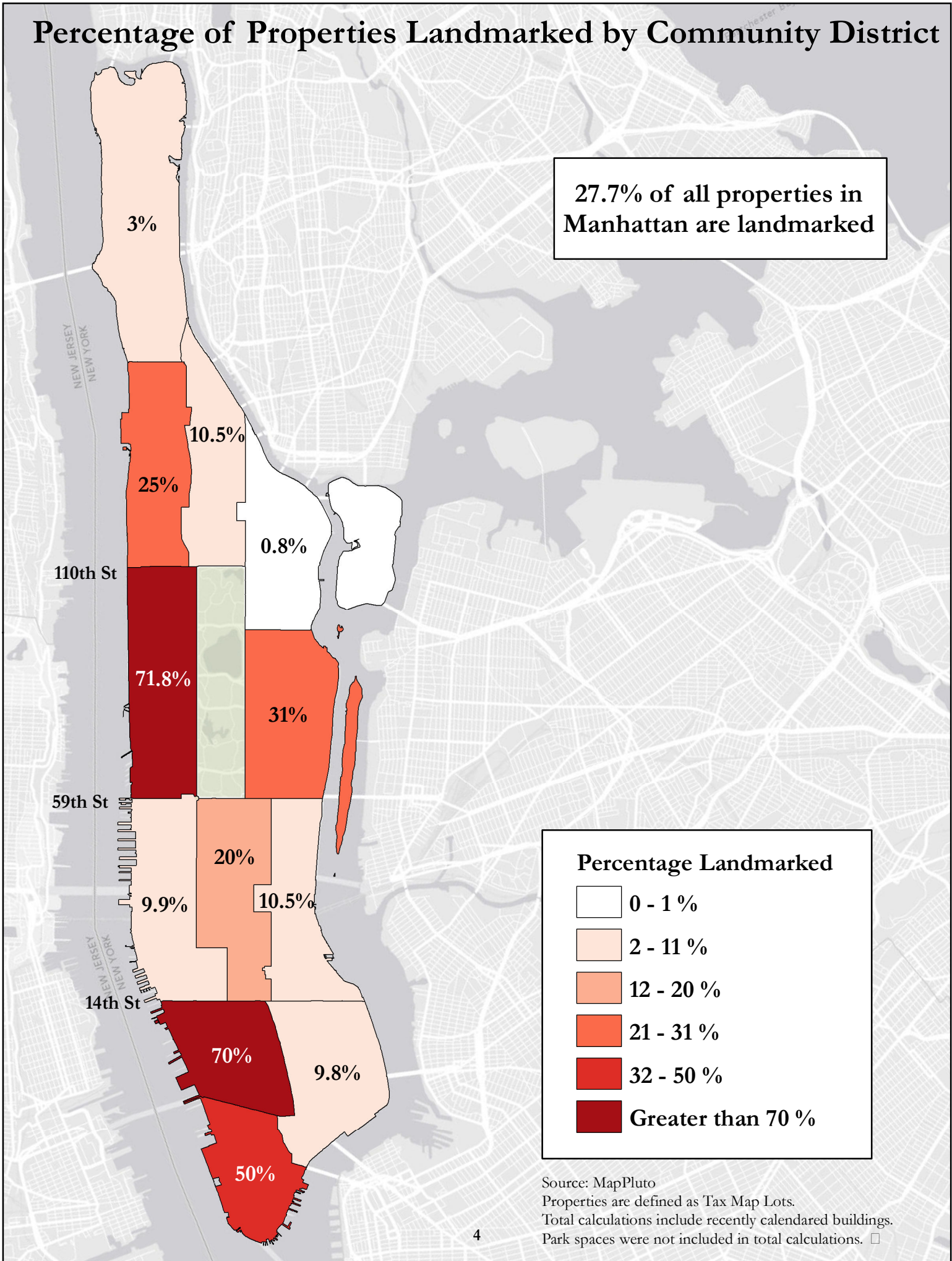
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<sup>6</sup> "Inherent vice' refers to design and construction issues that are created by the nature of materials and the scale and methods of construction. It ranges from the physical issues of material incompatibility and the failure of no-longer-available manufactured material products to contextual issues of changing performance standards such as climate control, energy usage and sustainability." Civic Visions LP. "Icons, Placeholders & Leftovers: Midtown East Report." 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Rendon, Jim. "High Mileage Alterations." *The New York Times*. June 20, 2013.

# Percentage of Properties Landmarked by Community District

**27.7% of all properties in Manhattan are landmarked**



Source: MapPluto  
 Properties are defined as Tax Map Lots.  
 Total calculations include recently calendared buildings.  
 Park spaces were not included in total calculations. □

## TABLES:

**TABLE 1: Percentage of Properties Landmarked by Community District (Manhattan)**

	Total Properties	Total Landmarked Properties	% of Properties Landmarked	% of Landmarked Properties in Historic Districts
<b>Manhattan</b>	<b>42,877</b>	<b>11,857</b>	<b>27.65%</b>	<b>92.99%</b>
CD 1 – Lower Manhattan/Tribeca	1,483	745	50.24%	83.89%
CD 2 – West/Greenwich Village/SoHo	4,747	3,333	70.21%	97.96%
CD 3 – East Village/Lower East Side	4,232	414	9.78%	85.99%
CD 4 – Clinton/Chelsea/Hell’s Kitchen	3,501	345	9.85%	89.57%
CD 5 – Midtown	3,096	631	20.38%	69.41%
CD 6 – Midtown East/Murray Hill	2,828	297	10.50%	82.83%
CD 7 – Upper West Side	4,420	3,173	71.79%	97.67%
CD 8 – Upper East Side	5,573	1,726	30.97%	92.41%
CD 9 – West Harlem	2,481	619	24.95%	95.64%
CD 10 – Central Harlem	4,404	461	10.47%	89.15%
CD 11 – East Harlem	3,171	25	0.79%	28.00%
CD 12 – Washington Heights/Inwood	2,712	88	3.24%	94.32%

**TABLE 2: Percentage of Properties Landmarked by Borough**

Borough	Total Properties	Total Landmarked Properties	% of Properties Landmarked
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>854,071</b>	<b>30,745</b>	<b>3.60%</b>
Manhattan	42,877	11,857	27.65%
Brooklyn	277,135	13,901	5.02%
Queens	323,329	3,724	1.15%
Bronx	89,130	900	1.01%
Staten Island	121,600	363	0.30%

**TABLE 3: Number of Historic Districts by Borough**

Borough	Number of Historic Districts
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>134</b>
Manhattan	73
Brooklyn	33
Queens	12
Bronx	12
Staten Island	4

**TABLE 4: Number of Vacant Lots and Parking Lots in Historic Districts by Borough**

Borough	Vacant Lots in Historic Districts	Parking Lots in Historic Districts
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>148</b>
Manhattan	48	50
Brooklyn	121	51
Queens	85	44
Bronx	51	2
Staten Island	18	1

## METHODOLOGY

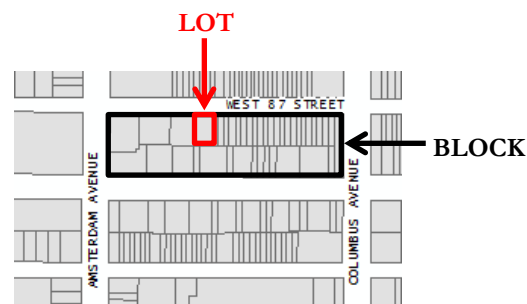
### Source

The data is from the City's Primary Land Use Tax Lot Output (PLUTO) data files<sup>1</sup>, which contain data maintained by the Department of City Planning (DCP), Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), and from the Landmarks Preservation Commission's (LPC) publications and website. The PLUTO data was analyzed in a geographic information system (GIS) program so that basic calculations could be made about landmarks and land use in the City.

### Definitions and Calculations

#### *Tax Map Lots*

Tax map lots were chosen to signify properties because this is how PLUTO denotes landmarked properties (including individual landmarks and Historic Districts) throughout the City. Additionally, tax map lots group condominium/co-op units in a building as a single property, as opposed to tax lots as defined by the Department of Finance, which lists each condominium unit as a separate property. For instance, a condominium building which has 100 apartments and 100 unique tax lots is treated as a single property and represented as a single tax map lot. A diagram depicting a typical tax map lot within a block is shown below.



#### *Landmarked Properties*

Only those properties that are NYC (LPC) landmarks were used in this analysis<sup>2</sup>. Those landmarked properties include individual landmarks and Historic Districts. Properties that are only listed on the New York State and National Register of Historic Places were excluded, as were LPC scenic and interior landmarks. All parks (and buildings on parkland) were excluded from final property calculations because the goal of this analysis was to examine properties with real development potential.

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<sup>1</sup> - 2011 version of PLUTO data.

<sup>2</sup> - Includes calendared historic districts: South Village (CD2); West End Collegiate Extension (CD7); and Riverside-West End Extension II (CD 7)

### *Percentage of Landmarked Properties*

The percentage of landmarked properties was calculated by identifying the total number of landmarked tax map lots and dividing that by the total number of tax map lots, excluding parklands. This percentage was calculated for Manhattan and each of its Community Districts.

### *Percentage of Landmarked Properties in Historic Districts*

The percentage of landmarked properties in Historic Districts was calculated by identifying the total number of tax map lots in Historic Districts (excluding parklands) and dividing that by the total number of landmarked tax map lots. Individual landmarks located in Historic Districts were not counted as Historic District properties to avoid double counting. This percentage was calculated on City-wide, Borough-wide and Community District levels.

### *Vacant Lots and Parking Facilities*

The total number of landmarked vacant lots was calculated by extracting all landmarked tax map lots and sorting them by the PLUTO data field, "Land Use". In the "Land Use" field, vacant lots are labeled as "11" and parking facilities are labeled as "10". All landmarked tax map lots with the "11" and "10" Land Use label were added to calculate the total number of landmarked vacant lots and underbuilt parking facilities.