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1744 Washington Ave. Ext :: Rensselaer NY 12144 :: p +1 518 283 0534

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To: William Gottlieb Real Estate Management Co., LLC
Subject: Pike Plan, City of Kingston, Ulster County, NY
Opinion of Local and National Register Eligibility
HAA 6154

To whom it may concern:

I serve as Senior Architectural Historian at Hartgen Archeological Associates, where I have worked since 1999 on projects throughout the northeast for both private and institutional clients. Before that I worked for the Office of the State Architect and then was in private practice as a restoration architect and as an adjunct staff at SUNY New Paltz (as Project Director of the Hudson Valley Study Center) and at Hamilton College. I have given many public presentations and have authored approximately 100 scholarly articles and three monographs on New York State architecture. I am a founding member and immediate past president of Hudson-Mohawk Vernacular Architecture and edit its newsletter. I have recently completed an 11-year term as Chair of the City of Troy's Historic Review Commission.

I have had numerous opportunities to conduct survey and documentation work in Kingston and am well acquainted with its built resources. My work across the northeast United States has included determining the eligibility of more than 100,000 structures during the past 40 years.

Urban Renewal in Kingston

Like many American cities, Kingston was anxious to access Urban Renewal dollars to help it recover from deindustrialization and depopulation. Redevelopment areas focused on what was termed "slum clearance" (a lens which meant different things depending on who wielded it) and utilized eminent domain to achieve its goals, which typically included attempts to stimulate private investment in urban cores. Three projects were intended to be completed within the city. The first two of these which were considered were Broadway East (begun in 1965), and Uptown. The latter project was not completed as originally envisioned, but interestingly it had proposed, in part, the conversion of Wall Street into a pedestrian mall with the construction of modern flat-roofed canopies as an integral part of its design.

The Pike Plan—Background and context

The so-called "Pike Plan" of Kingston was promoted by Woodstock watercolor artist John Pike as an alternative approach to the 'urban removal' strategies most-commonly employed by the Urban Renewal program, and specifically as an alternative to the pedestrian mall with canopies concept which had been proposed by Urban Renewal consultants Raymond & May Associates in 1961. Pike completed a watercolor view of Wall Street of his alternative proposal in 1969 that was published in the local press. With the support of Fred Johnson, chair of the Kingston Landmarks Preservation Commission, the plan was approved by the Urban Renewal Agency in 1970. Drawings for the project were completed by architect Albert E. Milliken and the work was completed in 1976.

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Pike's suggestion provided an important and early push-back to the notion that America's urban areas could only be improved by removing their aging built infrastructure and replacing it with structures and planning approaches that followed theories promulgated by LeCorbusier and other proponents of the International Style, which envisioned garden cities that incorporated zoning that separated commercial and residential spaces and pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Although it is true that Kingston did indulge in the Urban Renewal program's taste for destruction—particularly in the Rondout—the city put much of their funds into preservation and improvement of the pedestrian's experience in uptown. In addition to the canopies, interventions included the installation of bluestone and brick pavements, bluestone curbing, and street lighting that evoked the colonial period. Telephone poles and electrical lines were buried underground within the stockade area to increase its historic appeal. The restoration of the John Tremper house on North Front Street was completed with private funds by the contractor who was working on the Pike Plan; this work was seen as part of a general “facelifting” of downtown which, by 1973, became associated with Kingston's preparations for the Bicentennial.

As an historicist response to downtown Kingston, the Pike Plan should be compared with the better-known contemporary interventions constructed under the Urban Renewal program in the City of Salem, Massachusetts. Both projects proposed inversions to the standard outcome of acceptance of Urban Renewal funds. The Salem project included construction of hardscaping and street amenities designed by landscape architect John Collins of Philadelphia and architectural interventions by Oscar Padjen. While it has a higher profile in the annals American urban planning history due to the involvement of nationally-known historian Ada Louise Huxtable, the Salem project no doubt benefitted from the work being done in Kingston. The Pike Plan has received significant national coverage as part of the American Planning Association's *Great Places in America: Streets* survey, which covers the stockade more generally, as well as the Pike Plan in particular (<https://www.planning.org/greatplaces/streets/2012/wallstreet.htm>).

Alterations to the Pike Plan

Several of the canopies were renovated, including replacement of components, in 2010-11. This work became necessary due to the decay of portions of the canopies and included installation of standing-seam roofs, removal of roof-edge balustrades and installation of skylights to improve daylighting. New curbs, sidewalk bump-outs and street furniture were installed as part of that work. While the loss of the balustrades is unfortunate, it should be noted that they do not appear on Pike's painting of the Plan from 1969.

Assessment of Local Landmark and National Register Eligibility

Located within the locally designated Stockade (Area) District, the Pike Plan meets two of the four criteria established for Local Landmark designation by the ordinance that established the Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission. These include:

1. Exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community.

and

2. Is identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state or local history.

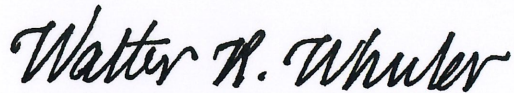
Under criterion 1, the Pike Plan would qualify for its association with the Urban Renewal program and the history of community response to the program as its consequences became more well known. The Pike Plan represents one of the more notable alternatives adopted, which collectively redirected the course of urban planning practices in the United States and forestalled more invasive interventions in Kingston.

Under criterion 2, the Pike Plan would qualify at a local level for its association with John Pike, prominent watercolor artist who lived in Ulster County, as well as its association with the Urban Renewal Program. The "colonial" design of the Pike Plan reflects aesthetic attitudes that flourished in the years preceding the celebration of the nation's Bicentennial and is the most significant reflection of that historic event remaining in Kingston today.

With respect to the National Register, the Pike Plan would be eligible for listing on the National Register as part of an updated Kingston Stockade District nomination. The Stockade was listed on the National Register in 1975, while elements of the Pike Plan were still under construction. It is common for districts to be re-evaluated every 20 or 30 years to allow for potential expansion and inclusion of significant structures which have more recently attained 50 years in age, or which are associated with more recent significant events or cultural movements. During the past 10 years projects associated with the Urban Renewal program have been listed on the National Register for their association with that program and the social history of our nation. Structures reflective of the Bicentennial celebration are just now becoming eligible for the National Register. While the Pike Plan was not conceived as part of the Bicentennial celebration, its "colonial" design was certainly dependent upon its associated aesthetic. An updated Stockade District nomination would necessarily acknowledge the Pike Plan as reflective of significant social events and urban planning history.

The Pike Plan would contribute to an updated Kingston Stockade District nomination under Criterion A, for its association with the Urban Renewal program at a national level, and for its association with the American Bicentennial at a local level.

Regards,



Walter R. Wheeler

Senior Architectural Historian