



Testimony before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
by Benika Morokuma  
Regarding the Designation of Fiske Terrace- Midwood Park Historic District, Brooklyn  
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The Municipal Art Society of New York is a private, non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote a more livable city. Since 1893, the Society has worked to advocate excellence in urban design, planning, contemporary architecture, historic preservation and public art.

I am Benika Morokuma, speaking on behalf of the Society, in strong support of the designation of the Fiske Terrace - Midwood Park Historic District. The cohesive district of single-family, detached houses is an outstanding example of early streetcar suburbs in the city and clearly meets the criteria for designation.

Fiske Terrace and Midwood Park are adjacent neighborhoods that both developed after the opening of the Brooklyn, Flatbush and Coney Island railroad in the last decade of the nineteenth century. They are the products of an innovative mass-production construction system employed by two local builders. Fiske Terrace was largely developed by the builder T.B. Ackerson, who utilized an efficient system of quality home construction while simultaneously laying out streets and installing underground water, sewer, gas, and electric lines. Midwood Park was developed primarily by the architect and contractor John Corbin. He invented a pre-fabrication system and built a factory that could produce 1,000 buildings a year. This mass-production system enabled the creation of the high-quality residential section of the borough within a very short period of time. The development of Fisk Terrace and Midwood Park neighborhoods started around 1905 and completed by 1920. Although mass-produced, no single house in Midwood Park is identical, because each owner was allowed to choose the style and architectural details of his or her home.

The district embodies architectural and design elements more commonly associated with suburbs than an urban Brooklyn neighborhood. The open front porches and grassy front lawns contribute to the neighborhood's quality as a "rus in urbe," or "country in the city." Further adding to this character are site features such as landscaped malls, short streets with dead-ends and an abundance of street trees.

Fiske Terrace - Midwood Park Historic District is also important for its role in the history of housing in New York. These prefabricated detached houses are, according to architectural historian Andrew Dolkart, the next generation of middle-class housing after the late nineteenth century row house.

The district today is remarkably intact, thanks in large part to community members who have long appreciated its character. We urge the commission to act quickly to designate it as a historic district in order to ensure its special qualities are protected.