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## **Tour Surveys Historical Significance of Manhattanville**

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More than 30 people huddled for warmth at the corner of 125th Street and Broadway Sunday morning, with McDonald's coffees and umbrellas at hand. They anxiously awaited a walking tour of Manhattanville, led by the neighborhood historian Eric K. Washington.

Sponsored by the Municipal Art Society, the tour provided a historical overview of Manhattanville, and a glimpse into the residents' perspectives on proposed Columbia University expansion.

Washington commented that "community spirit has been perpetually pitted against institutional might." The proposed expansion has galvanized a number of reactions, ranging from the Columbia hunger strikers' protests against the University's 197-c rezoning plan, to the alternative 197-a plan for community-based urban development, spearheaded by Community Board 9.

Washington and others who back the 197-a plan discussed the historical importance, with an emphasis on architecture and commercial enterprise. Mary Habstritt, former president of the New York chapter of the Society for Industrial Archeology, emphasized the unique dairy history of Manhattanville with respect to the University's Prentiss Hall and the surrounding area, noting the elegant white building "was originally built in 1909 as a dairy house for Sheffield Farms."

Ron Shiffman of the Pratt Center for Community Development said: "I've gone through dozens of buildings in the past few years, and each time I go through, I discover different things going on—new enterprises. All sorts of things have come here because it's an area that allows new ideas and enterprises to take root. Jane Jacobs once said that you need old buildings for new ideas and this is the place where you have a lot of that kind of generation of new ideas."

Christine Campbell, a former resident of Manhattanville and current parishioner at St. Mary's Episcopal Church on 126th Street, spoke of her life growing up in the red brick

housing projects at 545 W. 126th Street. At one point, housing at 126th Street was “purposefully interracial and interdenominational.” Housing projects attracted international tenants, and rooms were reserved for Columbia professors and their families.

Campbell noted: “In 1968, with the Civil Rights Movement, everything changed. The community preferred that professors no longer got reserved rooms in the buildings, and we lost everything—all services, guards, everything.”

Still, Campbell insists progress needs to be made in spirit with the community, “It’s about dreams,” she said.

St. Mary’s, the last stop on the tour, stands as the oldest congregation of continued service on the same site in Harlem. St. Mary’s is the only church of its design type that has retained its original interior. The church lies just outside Columbia’s expansion zone. Washington commented on the historical significance of this landmark: “For the second quarter of the 19th century, this entire neighborhood was basically built around this church. It was the only church in town. It wasn’t until the 1850s that other denominations came to Manhattanville.”

Rev. Earl Kooperkamp of St. Mary’s applauded Columbia’s hunger strikers for their efforts. He said: “The quick way of looking at it is that 197-a plan really takes the community as a village.... It strengthens, enhances, and supports the village.

Columbia’s 197-c plan is one owner and one product, and I think it can be compared to a plantation. For me, it comes down to, ‘do you want to live in a village or in a plantation?’”

The Reverend then clarified, echoing the overall sentiment of the tour: “It’s not that we don’t want expansion. It’s just that we want to find a way to make expansion work for our community.”

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