



Preservation League of NYS

OFFICERS

Frank Emile Sanchis III – Chair
Angel Ayón, AIA – Vice Chair
Patrick Ciccone – Vice Chair
Bret Garwood – Vice Chair
Lee Miller – Vice Chair
Ruth Pierpont – Secretary
Mark W. Warren – Treasurer

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Patrick Ciccone
Suzanne Clary
Andrew Capitman
Bret Garwood
Dr. Georgette Grier-Key
William A. Hurst
Thomas Jayne
Gregory R. Long
Evan Mason
Caroline Pasion
Paul R. Provost
Stephen Wilder
Lori Zabar
Caroline Rob Zaleski

Jay DiLorenzo
President

TRUSTEES COUNCIL

Jan C. K. Anderson
Karren Arrison
Kent Barwick
Duncan Barrett
George H. Beane
William L. Bernhard
Ildiko Butler
Constance L. Clapp
Randall T. Crawford
Joan K. Davidson
Steven C. Engelhart
Stephen A. Facey
R. Brandon Fradd
Lionel Goldfrank III
Roberta Brandes Gratz
Christopher Holbrook
Anne A. Hubbard
Robert J. Kafin
Marilynn G. Karp
Alexia Lalli
Richard J. Lippes
Robert B. MacKay
Richard A. Maitino
Jean M. McCarroll
Henry A. McCartney
Norman M. Mintz
Anne G. Older
Rev. Dr. Thomas Pike
Robert C. Quinlan
Daniel G. Romualdez
Janet C. Ross
John Sare
Thomas J. Schwarz
Robert D. Snedeker
Robert A.M. Stern, FAIA
Miriam Trementozzi
Anne H. Van Ingen
Cynthia C. Wainwright
Diana S. Waite
Areta Swartz Warren

June 13, 2022

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Eric Adams, Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine
One Center Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor Adams, Borough President Levine, and Councilmember Rivera:

The Preservation League of New York State was pleased to include the proposed South of Union Square Historic District as one of our “Seven to Save” properties for 2022-2023. We are in strong support of the ongoing effort, led by Village Preservation, to create a local historic district in this unique part of Manhattan.

The Preservation League is New York’s statewide not-for-profit preservation organization. We invest in people and projects that champion the essential role of preservation in community revitalization, sustainable economic growth, and the protection of our historic buildings and landscapes. We lead advocacy, economic development, and educational programs across the state.

Every other year, our “Seven to Save” list highlights properties of statewide significance in need of special attention, advocacy, and support, focusing on the economic and community-building benefits of historic preservation. Properties on this year’s list range from individual buildings to institutional campuses and, in the case of the proposed South of Union Square Historic District, large and diverse collections of historic buildings.

The historic significance of the area south of Union Square has been thoroughly researched and documented, and includes numerous examples of outstanding works of architecture by some of the greatest architects of the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries, including Napoleon LeBrun, Carrere and Hastings, James Renwick Jr., and many others. Beyond its architectural significance, this area features a wealth of buildings and sites associated with watershed events, industries, and social movements. Recently the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation determined that the potential district is eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places based on its historic significance in multiple areas, including architecture, African American history, the women's suffrage and women's rights movements, the African American and LGBTQ+ civil rights movements, the publishing industry, and the New York School of writers and artists.

In the first few decades of the modern preservation movement, advocates often focused narrowly on high-style buildings that were "the best remaining example" of their particular architectural mode, as if cities were architectural museums where architectural purity is the only criterion for preservation and only a few representatives of each era or style should be saved. Today's preservationists recognize that buildings, structures, landscapes, and sites can be significant and worth saving for their associations with notable people, events, and movements reflecting the diversity of American history. As tangible connections to the work, sacrifices, and accomplishments of our predecessors of all walks of life, these buildings and neighborhoods continue to inspire and enrich our lives and communities today. In addition, we are cognizant of the devastating environmental impact of unnecessary demolition and reconstruction, and seek to ensure that buildings remain in use and out of landfills whenever possible.

The proposed South of Union Square Historic District is important not because it exhibits architectural conformity; quite the opposite: it is important precisely because its diversity of architectural eras, types and styles tells the story of an area where people of all walks of life came together to create a uniquely vibrant environment where remarkable things happened, generation after generation. It is important because the people who lived and worked here included leaders in commerce, publishing, the arts, and various social justice movements, among many other endeavors. African Americans, women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and others led the fight for civil rights for themselves and their compatriots in this neighborhood, inspiring those who remain engaged in these ongoing struggles today. Artists active in this neighborhood defined the American artistic, literary, dance, and musical movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, ensuring New York's primacy as the cultural capital of the nation.

We recognize that no historic district, whether in Manhattan or anywhere else in New York State, can or should be frozen in time. Change defines this and other Manhattan neighborhoods and will continue to do so. As you know, historic district designation does not and should not prevent all change, but provides a mechanism for managing change in a way that is respectful of the history and character of the district, balances competing concerns, and does not cede control over the process to aggressive development interests.

On behalf of the Preservation League, I urge you to support the designation of the proposed South of Union Square Historic District.

Sincerely,



Katie Eggers Comeau
Vice President for Policy and Preservation

Cc: Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Councilmember, 3rd District
Andrew Berman, Village Preservation
Community Board 2, Manhattan
Community Board 3, Manhattan