



News from...

SENATOR THOMAS K. DUANE

29th SENATORIAL DISTRICT · NEW YORK STATE SENATE



**TESTIMONY BY NEW YORK STATE SENATOR THOMAS K. DUANE
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION'S
HEARING REGARDING DESIGNATION OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE
HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION II**

October 27, 2009

My name is Thomas K. Duane and I represent New York State's 29th Senate District, in which all of the proposed extension of the Greenwich Village Historic District is located. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony before the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) today.

I would like to express my appreciation to LPC for moving forward with the consideration of this second extension of the Greenwich Village Historic District, which includes a large section of the proposed South Village Historic District. As one of the few places where the architectural landscape, which played host to a succession of quintessential New York constituencies, remains virtually unaltered, the South Village is undeniably a neighborhood in need of designation. The area has a diverse history, accommodating Italian and Irish immigrants, African Americans, bohemians, hippies, and gay men and lesbians throughout the years.

The proposed Greenwich Village Historic District Extension II includes the area West of Sixth Avenue loosely bordered by West 4th Street, 7th Avenue South and West Houston Street. This area embodies the complex history of the city, with structures ranging from the grand Our Lady of Pompeii Church and Varitype Building to the modest tenements, which housed working-class immigrants. The low-rise nature and varying architectural details, from the elaborate to the minimal, characterize the row houses in the proposed extension, with the oldest dating from the 1810s to the 1830s. The varying styles exemplified in this area resulted from waves of construction with Federal and Greek Revival-style row houses starting in the early 19th century, Italianate, Neo-Grec, and Beaux-Arts-style tenements beginning in the 1860s, and Mediterranean Revival and Colonial Revival alterations in the early 20th century.

While the consideration of this extension is a significant step forward, I urge LPC to designate as expeditiously as possible the entire proposed district as detailed in the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation's (GVSHP) report, "The South Village: A Proposal for Historic District Designation." The tenements, row houses, industrial lofts, and churches together form a cohesive and unique urban fabric—and they are clearly under threat, as evidenced by the losses both west and east of Sixth Avenue, including the Tunnel Garage, the Circle in the Square Theater, the Sullivan Street Playhouse, and most recently the row house at 178 Bleecker Street. Considering the recent boom of development and the strong interest in this beautiful

neighborhood, there is an urgent need for the entire South Village Historic District to fall under LPC's thoughtful oversight.

LPC's commitment over the past few decades to the preservation of the Village has been admirable. I now ask that you not only take the significant step of designating the proposed Greenwich Village Historic District Extension II, but also move quickly to ensure that the entirety of the historic South Village is equally protected under the Landmarks Law.



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

SCOTT M. STRINGER
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

December 7, 2009

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Tierney:

I write to urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to survey the remaining two-thirds of the proposed South Village Historic District, and begin the process of formal consideration of that area for landmark designation as soon as possible.

As you know, the South Village has historical and architectural significance. Serving as a center of bohemian culture and an important location for the LGBT civil rights movement, the South Village is an important part of Manhattan's historic, cultural, and social fabric. The remaining portions of the South Village warrant immediate consideration and action for landmark designation. Designating the South Village Historic District will ensure that this important area will continue to contribute its history to our city's vibrant landscape. Without prompt action from the Commission, the neighborhood is at risk of seeing the further deterioration of the neighborhood. Pressure to develop the area may threaten the historic character of the neighborhood.

I am grateful to you and the Commission for the time and consideration given in response to the community's request for designation. We look forward to continuing to working with the Commission in our effort to protect and preserve the physical legacies of New York City's past.

Sincerely,

Scott M. Stringer
Manhattan Borough President

CC: Community Board 2
Andrew Berman, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

**Testimony of Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick before the Landmarks
Preservation Commission regarding the proposed landmark status for the South
Village Historic District.
October 27, 2009**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today regarding the creation of the South Village Historic District. I fully support the landmarking of this historic area, and hope that the testimony given here today will urge the board to move quickly towards protecting this special area in my district.

The South Village area as a whole has a celebrated reputation of being home to many burgeoning artists who went on to fame, including Bob Dylan, Jack Kerouac, James Agee, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sam Shepard and Jackson Pollock. These artists were drawn to the diversity of the South Village, and saw it as a haven for people who might have been considered “outsiders” in more gentrified neighborhoods of New York. They found a culture of acceptance in the independently owned stores, restaurants, galleries and music venues of the South Village. That spirit of inclusion lives on today as one walks the streets of the South Village and takes note of the distinctive mix of small storefronts and arts venues that lines the streets

Architecturally the area provides a physical history of the early development of New York City. There are several buildings in the neighborhood that have been proposed for individual landmarking, including fine examples of Federal and Greek revival row houses. No less important than the preservation of these more celebrated aspects of this area is the opportunity this district gives us to preserve one of the most intact architectural enclaves of the immigrant and working class communities who contributed so much to the early development of New York City in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The tenement style buildings that housed these South Village residents serve as a tangible reminder of the hardworking people who helped create the ethos of New York City as one not just for the wealthy, but for anyone who had the drive to pursue a better life for themselves and their families.

It is in this spirit that I urge the commission to move quickly in landmarking this area particularly in light of the buildings already lost during the process of landmark consideration. Furthermore, I encourage the Landmarks Preservation Commission to quickly designate the remainder of the proposed Greenwich Village Historic District, to ensure the preservation of this unique section of Greenwich Village.

The South Village area represents the cultural diversity and working class roots of New York City, and thus it seems only just that the neighborhood as a whole be designated as a landmark district, one that serves as a reminder that the city was built by immigrants, artists, the poor and the working class as well as the wealthy, in a synergistic effort that we in the district strive to emulate today.