

May 10, 2011

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

Re: East Village Historic District Study Areas

Dear Chair Tierney:

We write regarding the East Village Historic District Study Areas currently being reviewed by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). As you know, each of our groups has a keen interest in seeing the unique and special architectural and cultural heritage of the East Village recognized and protected, and have been deeply concerned about the loss of that character in recent years and the lack of adequate landmark designations in this neighborhood, especially as compared to other parts of the city.

Therefore we applaud the LPC considering a substantial expansion of historic district and landmark designations in the area, and fully support seeing this move ahead as quickly as possible. The East Village's architecture reflects an evolution over two centuries from a merchant outpost to a center of waves of immigration to a laboratory of urban rebirth and renewal. It is also the site of generations of culturally significant activity in the realms of labor, politics, the arts, and literature.

Because of its wealth of architectural and cultural resources, we hope that the proposed study areas are the beginning, not the end, of the LPC's consideration of additional historic district and landmark designations for the neighborhood. We understand that the LPC is open to looking at other parts of the neighborhood for potential historic district designations in the future, and we look forward to working with you on and supporting that effort.

However, given the geographic focus of the LPC's current effort, we believe it is important that the boundaries of the proposed study areas be expanded to include some critical historic resources and streetscapes immediately adjacent. We have attached a map showing the areas in question, and also included a description and basic information about each of the areas identified. We would be happy to provide detailed primary source documentation of the history of each of the buildings if you would like. As you know, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation has compiled such information about every building in the East Village, and would be happy to share that with the Commission for any of this or any other purpose.

We look forward to hearing back from you about this, and to working with you to help protect the precious and endangered historic resources of the East Village.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director
Greenwich Village Society
for Historic Preservation



Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director
Historic Districts Council



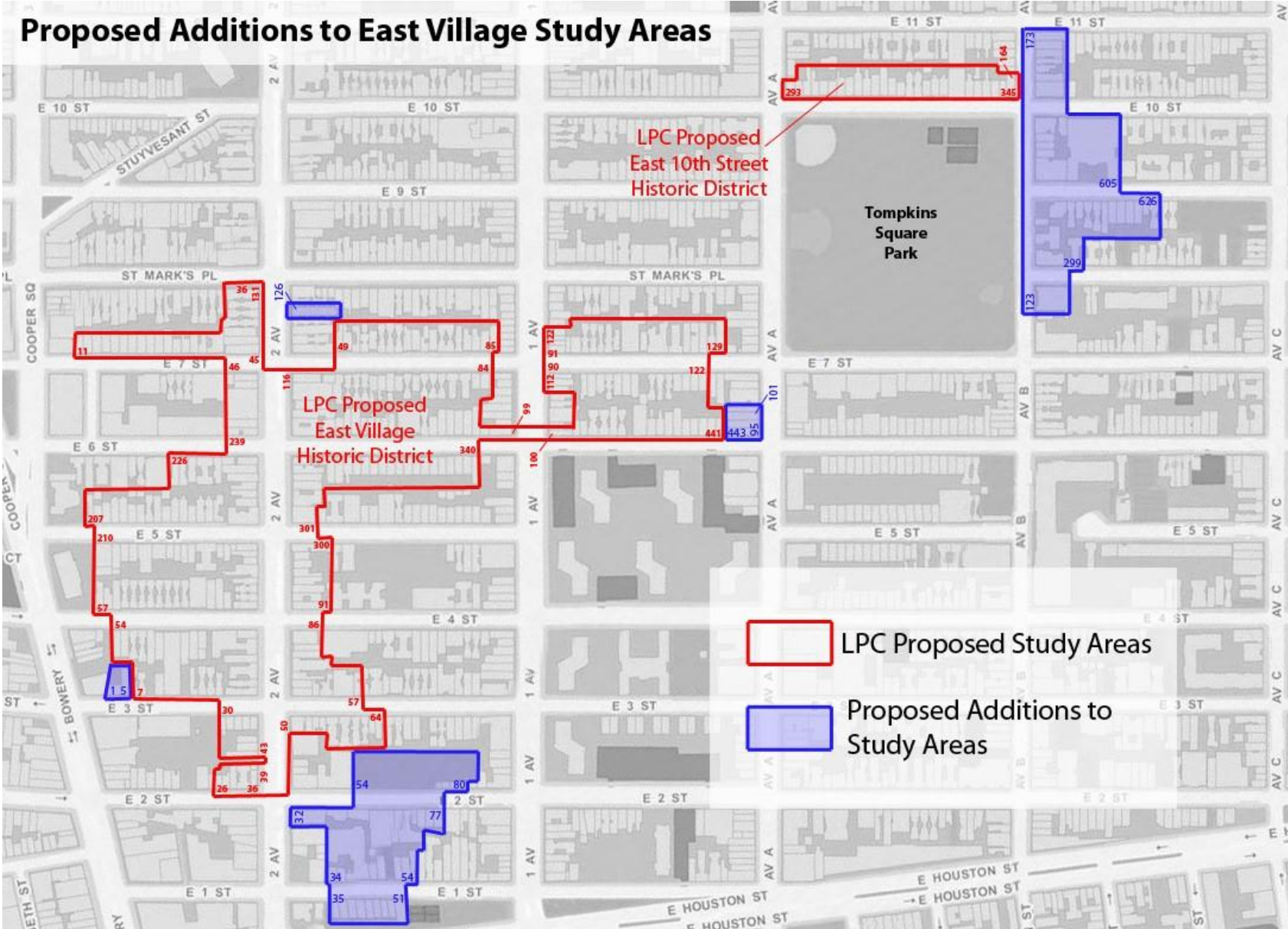
Richard Moses
Steering Committee
Lower East Side Preservation Initiative



Kurt Cavanaugh
Managing Director
East Village Community Coalition

Cc: Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver
State Senator Tom Duane
State Senator Daniel Squadron
City Councilmember Rosie Mendez
State Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh
State Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Community Board #3, Manhattan

Proposed Additions to East Village Study Areas



Submitted by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Historic Districts Council, East Village Community Coalition, and Lower East Side Preservation Initiative

Descriptions of Proposed Additions to the East Village and Tompkins Square North Historic District Study Areas

Building Descriptions -- Proposed Additions to East Village Historic District Study Area

- ***East 1st Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues (34 - 54 and 35 - 51 East 1st Street)*** – This block of East 1st Street features a number of intact Italianate tenement buildings, most built between 1865 and 1899, that are representative of the typologies of the study area. In addition, there are two State and National Register-eligible buildings, the former Public School 79 and the Catholic Worker St. Joseph House of Hospitality, that enhance the story of the immigrant experience conveyed by these buildings.

The former Public School 79 at 38 East 1st Street is called out in the East Village/Lower East Side Rezoning Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and described as “built in 1885 and designed by David I. Stagg, the Superintendent of Public School Buildings. The four-story brick building with Italianate and Gothic elements is notable for its terra-cotta and stone ornamentation. It is also a rare example of High Victorian Gothic school design in Manhattan. It has been converted into apartments and has several modern roof additions.”

Also referenced in the EIS, the tenement building that houses the Catholic Worker St. Joseph House of Hospitality at 36 East 1st Street is identified as, “(a) soup kitchen founded by Dorothy Day in 1933. Located in a 4-story tenement with a bracketed cornice. LPC has determined that this building appears to meet eligibility criteria for S/NR listing.”

- ***East 2nd Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues (54 - 80, 35 - 77 East 2nd Street and 32 2nd Avenue)*** – This group of buildings on East 2nd Street includes a number of landmarked and landmark eligible sites that are documented in the EIS – the New York Marble Cemetery (NYCL, S/NR), the former Third District Magistrates Court Building (S/NR eligible), the Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection (S/NR eligible) – as well as rowhouses and tenement buildings that complete the narrative of this block.

Founded in 1831, the New York City Marble Cemetery at 54-72 East 2nd Street is neighbored on its southeast at 74 to 80 East 2nd Street by a handsome group of altered (with cornices and windows surrounds intact) Federal rowhouses.

The description of the former Third District Magistrates Court building at 32 2nd Avenue (S/NR eligible) in the EIS says “(it) was designed in 1918 by Alfred Hopkins in the Italian Renaissance style. The two-story solid and fortress-like brick building was originally a courthouse and prison. The main entrance of the building on East 2nd Street, as well as the windows on the second floor, are arched and set in elaborate brick round-arch surrounds with fanlights. The small first-floor windows have heavy brick casings, and on the ground floor there are openings with metal grills. Some of the arched windows have been partially

infilled with brick. Hopkins designed many institutional buildings throughout the city, but he is best known as an architect of federal penitentiaries in New York, Pennsylvania, and in the Midwest. The building now houses the Anthology Film Archives.”

Moving westward along the south side of 2nd Street there is a pair of apartment buildings (49-51 East 2nd Street) constructed together in 1890 with restrained, handsome ornament, most notably a simple metal cornice and a parapet decorated with panels in a basket weave pattern.

Built as the Olivet Memorial Church, the Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection at 59 East 2nd Street is noted in the EIS as, “built in 1891 by J.C. Cady & Company. Gothic church with a rusticated stone façade. Features include rounded buttresses, a central gable, and pointed-arch windows. Originally contained a library, baths, gymnasium, and club rooms. LPC has determined that the Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection appears to meet the eligibility criteria for S/NR listing.” The adjacent rowhouse at 65 East 2nd Street which housed the rectory for the church is also mentioned in the EIS where it is described as, “a 3-story brick row house with ornate iron fire escape. The entrance has a bracketed entablature and there is a bracketed roof cornice. The building dates from the 19th century.”

The Greek Revival style house at 65 East 2nd Street appears to have been built in the late 1830's. The lintels, cornice, and doorway maintain many original details, and even the fire escape and balconies, added later, consist of elaborate ironwork which adds to the lyrical character of the façade. The tenement at 67 East 2nd Street was erected in 1899 and its ornate façade features pedimented terra cotta window surrounds, classically-derived molding, belt courses and keystones with human and animal figures. The Italianate tenements at 73-77 East 2nd Street (some with rounded cornices) were erected between the 1860s and 1870s.

- ***East 3rd Street between the Bowery and 2nd Avenue (1-5 East 3rd Street)*** – The Wyoming Building at 5 East 3rd Street, a handsome Arts and Crafts loft building erected in 1911 by the prolific firm of Bernstein and Bernstein, is bordered by two altered and combined federal style rowhouses erected in 1831 which retain their original Flemish bond brick pattern on the first floor, and had a full floor added above in the late 19th century.
- ***Avenue A between East 7th Street and East 6th Street (95 -101 Avenue A, 443 East 6th Street)*** – The four story Neo-Grec tenement building at 101 Avenue A designed by William Jose in 1879 has an ornate façade with black brick and stone belt courses and window hoods with incised ornament in addition to a large cornice. This building which is called out in the EIS has housed a succession of German saloons and social halls on its ground floor since its inception and since 1979 has housed the Pyramid Club, a performance space known for having a profound influence on performance art and politically conscious drag in the 1980s. (Extensive historic materials and analysis of the significance of this building have previously

been supplied to the LPC as part of a request for evaluation, as well as numerous letters of support for designation.)

The neighboring tenement buildings at 443 6th Street and 95-99 Avenue A complete this composition of 19th century buildings that illustrate the immigrant history of the neighborhood.

- **126 2nd Avenue** – This building, known as the Orpheum Theater, is identified as a potential architectural resource in the EIS. It is described as, “an Italian Renaissance, 2-story brick and stone theater. Built sometime prior to 1920 when it was a movie theater. Ornamented with an elaborate second-floor loggia, carvings of theatrical masks, cartouches, and a cornice. LPC has determined that the Orpheum Theater appears to meet the eligibility criteria for S/NR listing.”

Building Descriptions -- Tompkins Square North Historic District Study Area

- **Avenue B between 7th and 11th Streets (123 - 173 Avenue B, 299 East 8th Street, 602 - 626 East 9th Street and 605 - 615 East 9th Street)** – The buildings in this area, which include rowhouses, tenements, settlement and charity houses, a Catholic church and a Snyder school, are highly symbolic of the history of this neighborhood and are noted in the EIS as a potential historic district. A number of the buildings are landmarked or landmark eligible sites.

The description of these blocks in the EIS states, “this potential district includes...blocks of 19th- and early 20th-century tenements, lodging houses, row houses, a historic church, a modern church, and a school along Avenue B and part of East 9th Street. Known resources within the district include ... the Charlie Parker Residence, Christodora House, Public School 64, the Tompkins Square Lodging House for Boys, and St. Brigid’s. An additional charity building in the potential district is the 5-story brick Home for the Improvement of the Poor, built in 1929 at 131-135 Avenue B adjacent to the Lodging House for Boys ... The 19th-century tenements on Avenue B and East 9th Street also represent a range of tenement types and styles. The tenements at 173 Avenue B retain their cast iron storefronts.”

Avenue B from East 10th Street to East 11th Street comprises the variety of tenement building types in the East Village including a large classically ornamented building at 159-161 Avenue B, the smaller 5-story, three bay Katz building (1890) at 165 Avenue B with a cornice with a central sunburst panel, and the group of Neo-Grec tenement buildings at 167–173 Avenue B. 602-626 East 9th Street represents the transition of the neighborhood with a couple of Federal rowhouses from the 1840s nestled between Neo-Grec and Italianate tenements constructed in the latter part of that century.

In addition to the already landmarked Charlie Parker Residence at 151 Avenue B (NYCL, S/NR) and the SNR-listed Christodora House at 147 Avenue B, the EIS also identified the following landmark eligible sites:

“St. Brigid’s Roman Catholic Church (S/NR-eligible) at 119 Avenue B, which dates to 1848, ‘is among the oldest Roman Catholic church buildings in New York and one of the first in the Gothic style,’ according to *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan’s Houses of Worship* by David Dunlap (2004: 196). Patrick Keely, an Irish immigrant and architect of several Roman Catholic churches in Brooklyn, was the architect for the originally Irish parish church. Fronting on Avenue B, the Gothic church has two corner towers and a central pitched-roof section with three pointed-arch entrances. Three pointed-arch windows are located above the entrances. Similar windows line the north façade along East 8th Street. The original tower spires have been removed and the building has experienced structural damage. It is currently unused and closed to the public. However, since publication of the DEIS, the Archdiocese of New York accepted an anonymous donation for the church’s restoration and reuse as a parish church. Restoration plans are currently being developed.”

“The former Public School 64 (NYCL, S/NR-eligible) at 605-615 East 9th Street is a five-story brick and stone school building designed by C.B.J. Snyder in a French Renaissance Revival style. The school opened in 1906 and it has an H-plan with the courtyards facing the street. The larger courtyard is on East 10th Street, and it is raised above the street. The courtyard space contains the school auditorium with the main playground area located on the roof. This auditorium was used for public performances and speeches by such politicians as Governor Alfred Smith and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. On East 9th Street, a shallow flight of stairs leads to the slightly elevated entrance courtyard, which is enclosed by an original decorative metal fence with stone piers. The first floor of the school building is a rusticated stone base and the upper floors are clad in brick with stone trim. The facades have large multi-paned windows and ornamental details include stone window lintels and bracketed sills on the façade sections overlooking the courtyards, stone window architraves and decorative spandrels on the street facades of the wings and the central pavilions on East 9th and 10th Streets, a massive stone architrave around the main entrance from the East 9th Street courtyard, a stone entablature above the fourth floor, and a top story designed as a Mansard roof with elaborate stone dormers and slate shingles. From the mid-1970s until 1998, the school housed Charas/El Bohio, a community group. The building is currently vacant.”