



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES
REGARDING DESIGNATION of the SULLIVAN-THOMPSON HISTORIC DISTRICT**

February 7, 2017

Good morning Chairs Koo, Greenfield and Committee Members. My name is Lauren George, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am delighted to be here to discuss our recent designation of the Sullivan Thompson Historic District, located in the South Village in Manhattan Community District 2. After holding a public hearing on November 29, 2016ⁱ, the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted unanimously to designate the district on December 13, 2016 and the City Planning Commission adopted a position in support of the district on February 1, 2017.

The Sullivan-Thompson Historic District consists of approximately 157 buildings, including row houses, tenements, commercial structures, and institutions, with streetscapes that illustrate the growth of the neighborhood from its origins as a residential row house neighborhood in the early 19th century to a vibrant Italian-American neighborhood in the early 20th century. The neighborhood's early development occurred in concert with the surrounding areas as the result of unprecedented growth in Manhattan, which pushed the limits of the city northward. The district's earliest houses are characteristic of the distinctive residential architecture of the Federal period, while a few later row houses reflect the increasing popularity of the Greek Revival style.

Large numbers of immigrants began to settle in the area during the mid-19th century. The majority were Irish and German, although there were sizable populations from France, England, and other Western European countries. By the 1890s, the immigrant residents of the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District were overwhelmingly Italian in origin, making the area one of the most densely-populated Italian communities in New York's history. The Church of St. Anthony of Padua, which was completed in 1888, was the first parish church building constructed on behalf of Italian immigrants in the United States. In addition to European immigrants, the blocks that comprise the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District were home to a sizable African American population.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

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From the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, alterations to the district's built fabric reflected the successive waves of immigration. Beginning in the mid-19th century, a severe shortage of available space for the newly arrived immigrants led to conversion of single-family row houses to multiple-family dwellings. Common alterations included altering attic stories to full height, adding whole floors, constructing rear extensions, and incorporating storefronts.

In addition to the conversion of existing housing stock, purpose-built tenements began to be constructed in the historic district in the 1850s, and in increasing numbers by the 1870s, to house the area's growing working-class and immigrant population. The district contains roughly 92 purpose-built tenement buildings designed in a variety of styles, including the Italianate, Neo-Grec, Queen Anne, and Renaissance Revival styles. Due to greater public awareness of the substandard living conditions that persisted in the city's tenements, the Tenement House Acts of 1879 and 1901 brought new levels of housing reform to address crowded and unsanitary living conditions. The housing stock in this district reflects those housing reforms.

The period after World War I saw a Village-wide trend in the rehabilitation and modernization of row houses and tenements. Within the district, storefronts continued to be added to residential buildings during the 20th century's first decades. The war also marked a turning point for immigration to the United States, bringing nativist sentiment to the fore and prompting restrictive immigration legislation. Particularly the Immigration Act of 1924 instituted national origin quotas, resulting in a steep reduction in Italian immigration. The Italian-American population here declined as many residents moved to more modern apartment houses in other parts of the city or to the suburbs.

The extension of Avenue of the Americas and the almost simultaneous widening of Houston Street in the late 1920s and early 1930s led to the demolition of buildings and separated the neighborhood from the portions of the South Village to the north and west. The economic conditions of the Great Depression and discriminatory housing policies halted development in the district during the 1930s and distinguish



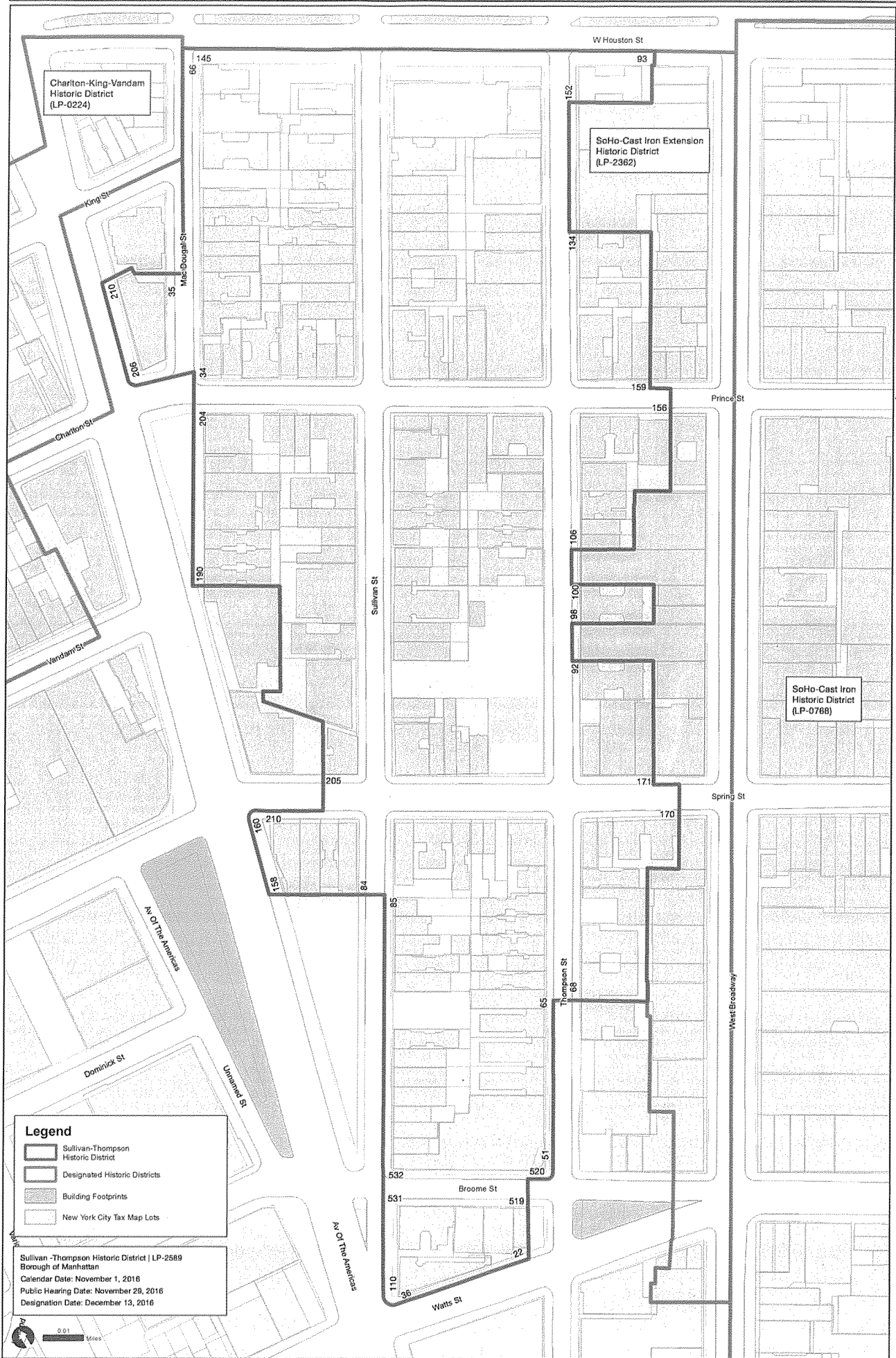
the district's early 20th -century development from that of the mid-20th century.

Although the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District is no longer an immigrant community, this heritage continues to be reflected in its row houses, tenements, commercial and institutional buildings that were constructed from the early 19th century to the end of the 1920s. Nestled between a number of major thoroughfares and designated historic districts, this area remains a distinctive enclave that creates a unique sense of place. The Landmarks Preservation Commission hopes that you will affirm this designation today. Thank you.

ⁱ On November 29, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Twenty-eight spoke in favor of designation, including Council Member Corey Johnson, a representative of Borough President Gale Brewer, and New York State Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick, as well as representatives of Community Board 2, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Historic Districts Council, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Society for the Architecture of the City, Charles Street Block Association, Victorian Society of New York, eight property owners with buildings in the district, and local residents. Four testified in opposition to designation including a representative of the Archdiocese of New York and Diocese of Brooklyn, a property owner, and three additional property owners. Two additional speakers testified that select properties should be non-contributing. The Commission also received 414 letters in favor of designation, including one from Council Member Margaret Chin, and one letter in opposition from the Real Estate Board of New York.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

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CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

80 Maiden Lane, 13th Floor, New York, New York 10038

**Testimony of Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director
Catholic Community Relations Council
NYC Council Subcommittee of Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses
Sullivan-Thompson Historic District L.U. 20175206
February 7, 2017**

Good morning. I am Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council (“CCRC”), representing the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn on legislative and policy issues involving the City of New York. Today, I appear before you in opposition to the proposed Sullivan-Thompson Historic District.

While the goals of historic preservation are laudable and supported by the Catholic Church in New York City, the designation of landmark and historic district status imposes a particularly onerous burden for religious institutions. There is no source of public funding to address the increased costs imposed by landmarks regulation and such designation frequently prevents a parish from effectively utilizing its property to achieve mission based commitments and goals. Church architecture, as you all know, frequently incorporates carved stone work and stained glass that is extraordinarily costly to maintain and repair. For all intents and purposes, this financial burden falls solely on the strained resources of a parish whose primary goal is to further its mission and serve its constituency.

The ever expanding designation of historic districts has burdened religious institutions in many neighborhoods throughout New York City and this pending designation will not be any different. Religious institutions are already challenged by high operating costs, and with scarce resources available, the inclusion of their buildings into historic districts only creates additional hardship and compromises the Church’s ability to focus on its prime mission. As you know, this mission includes such priorities as the operation of food pantries, development of affordable housing and assistance to immigrants in our City.

The Parish of St. Anthony of Padua owns 5 buildings and 2 vacant lots in the proposed historic district. Certainly, the Church of St. Anthony of Padua at 155 Sullivan Street is architecturally distinctive, but for the reasons I just indicated, should not be part of this designation. Similarly, the buildings at 60 MacDougal Street and 154 Sullivan Street might be older, but they are certainly not distinctive structures.

The other properties owned by the Parish should also be removed from being part of this district but for other reasons. LPC staff indicated last fall that 85% of the proposed district’s buildings were constructed before 1916 making them particularly significant and worthy of designation. Only 15% of the buildings in this proposed district were built after 1916. Two of them are owned by the Parish and have little architectural, cultural or historic significance. They are located at 141 Thompson St. and 190 Prince St. and were constructed in 1952 and 1955.

They typify the definition of noncontributing structures and should be removed from being considered as part of this historic district.

Therefore, due to the combination of unfunded fiscal burdens and noncontributing factors, we urge that the properties owned by the Archdiocese of New York be excluded from inclusion in this proposal.

Thank you.



Greenwich
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Historic
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
LANDMARKS SUBCOMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF THE SULLIVAN-THOMPSON HISTORIC DISTRICT
February 7, 2017**

Good morning Councilmembers. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation is the largest membership organization in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. On behalf of our members, we strongly support the designation of the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District.

Since 2006, GVSHP has advocated for the landmark designation of this area as part of our proposed South Village Historic District. We have been working very closely with City Councilmember Corey Johnson for the last three years to seek designation of this final phase of that proposed historic district. With his consistent advocacy and support, the Landmarks Preservation Commission moved ahead with designation in December.

Designation of the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District was a cause for broad celebration in the local community, among residents, merchants, and many property owners.

The designation did not come a moment too soon. Developers such as Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner have been buying up properties in the area, and the current zoning could allow towers of up to 300 feet in height.

The district is overwhelmingly deserving of designation. It has been listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and was designated one of New York State's seven most important endangered historic sites by the Preservation League of New York State.

The Sullivan-Thompson Historic District provides a wonderfully well-preserved window into New York at the turn of the last century. More than any other designated historic district in New York City, the Sullivan Thompson Historic District is a testament to the waves of immigrants which came to New York during the last great wave of immigration that transformed our city and country.

The district contains the very first church built for an Italian-American parish, and an incomparable array of tenements, reform housing, and other

institutions connected to late 19th and early 20th century working-class and immigrant life in New York. Now more than ever, it's critical that we honor and recognize this history.

I therefore strongly urge you to uphold the designation of the Sullivan Thompson Historic District by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. And I want to offer our extreme gratitude to Councilmember Corey Johnson for his hard work and steadfast advocacy which helped lead to this designation.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOSEPH HOPET

Address: _____

I represent: Thompson Assets LLC

Address: 152 Thompson St. NY NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisa Persavog

Address: 1 CENTRE ST

I represent: LANDMARKS PRES. COMMISSION

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura George

Address: Landmarks Preservation

I represent: Commission

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Sullivan Thygeson Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Rosenberg

Address: 80 Maiden Lane

I represent: Catholic Community Relations Council

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. S-T HD Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Simon Bankoff

Address: _____

I represent: Historic Districts Council

Address: 232 E. 11 St NY 10003

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 02/07/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Bean Apmann

Address: _____

I represent: GVSHIP

Address: 232 E. 11th St. NY 10003

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms