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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

December 22, 2020

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

RE: Request for Evaluation for 50 West 13th Street, Manhattan

Dear Chair Carroll,

I write in support of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation's (GVSHP) November 4, 2020 letter which sought a Request for Evaluation (RFE) for 50 West 13th Street, Manhattan. The RFE would consider the 19th century, Greek Revival row house for historic landmark designation.

50 West 13th Street is currently occupied by the 13th Street Repertory Company, an "Off-Off Broadway" theater founded in 1972 by artistic director Edith O'Hara. Her passing has drawn attention to the future of the historic row house and the beloved theater that has hosted decades of actors, directors, artists, designers, and playwrights in the spirit of experimentation and innovation.

The Greek Revival row house was originally constructed in 1846-47 and retains a number of historic attributes including parlor floor windows and a cast iron portico, among other architectural features. The basement of the building is purported to have served as a way station on the Underground Railroad and a speakeasy during the Prohibition era; both claims warrant further historical research.

In 1958 the basement and first floor were converted into a theater and occupied by the Washington Players Studio, one of the first Off-Off-Broadway organizations that offered monthly plays and acting classes. In 1972, the 13th Street Repertory Company was founded at the site and remained in operation until Edith O'Hara's passing.

The 13th Street Repertory Company was home to the longest-running play in Off-Off Broadway history, Israel Horovitz's *Line*, which played continuously from 1974 until 2018. The theater also spearheaded a musical theater youth program called Mama Hare's Tree, which continues today under the name Kid City Theater. The work and legacy of the 13th Street Repertory Company has been commended by Governor Andrew Cuomo, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and President Barack Obama.

Supporting and sustaining the history of the influential 13th Street Repertory Company and its contributions to Off-Off-Broadway theater is integral to the designation of 50 West 13th Street as a historic landmark and an icon of Greenwich history. For these key attributes and architectural features, I strongly support a Request for Evaluation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

cc: Bob Gormley, District Manager, Community Board 2
Peg Breen, President, New York Landmarks Conservancy
Andrew Berman, Executive Director, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

Attached:
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, November 4, 2020 Letter
Re: Request for Evaluation for 50 West 13th Street, Manhattan