

**Testimony in Support of Designation of
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center
208 West 13th Street (aka 206-218 West 13th Street)
Manhattan Tax Map Block 617, Lot 47
June 4, 2019**

My name is Andrew Berman, and I am the Executive Director of Village Preservation. I am here today to express our strong support for the proposed designation of the NYC LGBT Community Center for individual landmark designation.

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Andrew Berman

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In 2014, Village Preservation proposed the Center, along with the Stonewall Inn, the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse, and Julius' Bar for landmark designation, addressing the lack of recognition of the important LGBT history of these sites in their historic district designations, which in all cases contained no mention of this incredibly important aspect of these buildings' history. The Stonewall Inn was landmarked in 2015, and the GAA Firehouse is now under consideration along with the Center. We appreciate the LPC moving this proposed designation forward, and note the remarkable progress of the last several years. Prior to 2015 there was not a single individually landmarked building in New York City based primarily upon LGBT history. In fact, while there has been significant progress on that account in the designation of historic districts, until today the Stonewall Inn remained New York City's sole individual LGBT historic landmark. We are happy to see that change.

The Center is eminently worthy of landmark designation. For three and a half decades it has been a center of community and political organizing and the provision of much-needed social services, a communal meeting place, a public forum, and a keeper of culture. The Center has played a key role in recognizing and serving the needs of LGBT youth, seniors, families, religious communities, and people with disabilities; victims of hate crimes; people with AIDS; and writers, artists, and performers. It was the scene of early organizing to secure civil rights legislation, access to healthcare, and inclusive curricula in city schools. The Annual LGBT Pride March has been organized there, Presidential candidates have spoken there, and a broad array of groups representing the all-encompassing diversity of the LGBT community have been formed, housed, or met there.

It should also be noted that the Center has been an incredibly thoughtful and loving caretaker of this historic property, a former public school whose history extends back almost to the Civil War. Over the years they have renovated and added to the building to address its ever-expanding needs and role while respecting its history, architecture, and context. We are confident that this careful stewardship will continue as the Center's needs continue to evolve. We remain proud of the Center's contributions to the Greenwich Village community and its proud legacy of championing social justice and inclusion, particularly around LGBT rights.

The Greenwich Village Historic District designation report makes no mention of the incredibly important role in history this building played starting in 1983, fourteen years after the district was designated and the report published. Five years after we first proposed the Center for landmark designation, we are happy to be able to stand before you to urge you to vote to designate this site a New York City landmark.