



NYC LGBTQ Historic Sites Project

Making an invisible history visible

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October 21, 2026

NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
253 Broadway, 11th floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Letter of Support for Calendaring 86 University Place, Manhattan, for NYC
Individual Landmark Designation

Dear Chair Kersavage,

We write in support of calendaring the building at 86 University Place, in Manhattan, for consideration as an individual landmark. Given the building's pending demolition, this request is urgent.

The architecturally intact building is significant to LGBTQ history for its association with the Bagatelle, a popular pre-Stonewall lesbian bar that operated here from 1952 to 1959. It was one of the few spaces at the time where working-class lesbians could gather and was therefore a vital community space for many. Its location in Greenwich Village adds vital context to the LGBTQ cultural landscape of the neighborhood. For these reasons, [the Bagatelle](#) was mapped on our website of over 500 sites.

The Bagatelle's small first floor was split up into two main spaces – a bar in the front and a small dance floor in the back. As was custom in this era, when it was illegal to be gay, the bar was routinely raided. In response, the bar installed a red light that would go on when the police arrived, signaling to patrons that they should stop dancing to avoid being arrested for the crimes of dancing with a same-sex partner, not dressing feminine enough, or “disorderly conduct,” which was interpreted very loosely.

The Bagatelle also tells the story of racial discrimination experienced by lesbians of color. In *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), the prominent Black lesbian feminist, writer, and activist Audre Lorde offers a vivid description of the Bagatelle, remembering it as “the most popular gay-girl's bar in the Village” but that the bouncer always carded her at the door while her white friends never were.

With demolition imminent for this building, we urge the Commission to calendar it for individual landmark designation to help safeguard a significant site that illustrates LGBTQ life in pre-Stonewall New York.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amanda Davis
Executive Director