

## OWNER AND CITY ALLOW DESTRUCTION OF 200-YEAR-OLD LANDMARK

*Failures at 14 Gay Street Spark Campaign for Landmarks Reform and Stricter Oversight*

No. 14 Gay Street is a landmarked 200-year-old house, world-renowned as the home of Ruth McKenney, whose writings about her life there became the basis for the book, play, film, and TV shows *My Sister Eileen*, and the Leonard Bernstein musical and films *Wonderful Town*. After years of neglect and disrepair (including under a period of city ownership in 2020 after the prior owner died without a will), in early November a new owner initiated city-approved work on the building that fatally undermined its structural stability. According to the city, structural walls were illegally removed, forcing an order for the building to be dismantled to prevent a collapse.

Village Preservation, which had been asking the city to investigate complaints of illegal work and dangerous conditions here, immediately gathered elected officials, the community board, and hundreds of angry neighbors and New Yorkers for a press conference to blast the owner and City for their failed oversight, and demand accountability and reform. As tragic as this situation is, it's

not unique — just a year earlier, the city ordered the demolition of nine landmarked early 19th-century houses at 14th Street and Ninth Avenue after a developer's work "revealed" unsafe and dangerous conditions there.

It's essential that the City change the way it monitors and protects vulnerable historic landmarks, to prevent this from ever happening again, and that all responsible be punished sufficiently so it's clear there's more to be lost than gained in violating the law and destroying our history. With our elected officials, we've called for maximum penalties against all responsible; assurances that this owner's five other adjacent landmarked properties are preserved and restored (neighboring 16 Gay was also initially earmarked for potential emergency demolition); steps to ensure all historic materials from 14 Gay's exterior are dismantled intact and required to be reused for a faithful reconstruction of the building; and the city

to institute steps to more closely monitor landmarked properties like these which are fragile, in poor condition, and/or under ownership with an established track record of poor care for their properties.

We have received assurances from city agencies on all items, including that 16 Gay Street will not have to come down. But some of those assurances have not offered many specifics or particulars. As we go to press, we are continuing to demand the city provide more concrete information on how the responsible parties will be punished, how promises of 14 Gay Street's accurate reconstruction will be monitored and ensured, and exact measures that will be implemented to ensure the restoration of all adjoining properties and the careful oversight of similar historic properties throughout our neighborhoods and city.



# AFTER 10-YEAR CAMPAIGN, JULIUS' BAR LANDMARKED!

*Effort Highlights Focus on Civil Rights History, and More Work that the City Must Do*

In December, the City finally landmarked the Julius' Bar building at 159 West 10th Street. An 1820s structure housing one of the city's oldest continuously operating bars and its oldest gay bar, Julius' was also the scene in 1966 of a groundbreaking pre-Stonewall civil rights action challenging state regulations that criminalized LGBTQ+ people and spaces that catered to them. The unanimous vote came almost 10 years to the day after Village Preservation began its campaign to seek official recognition for this incredibly important history.

In December 2012, Village Preservation asked the State of New York to rule Julius' eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places, based upon this enormously important civil rights history. A few months later, they did, making Julius' one of only a handful of sites across the country so recognized for their connections to LGBTQ+ history. A year later, we proposed Julius', along with the Stonewall Inn, the LGBT Community Center, and the Gay Activist Alliance Firehouse, as New York City landmarks, which affords them a higher level of protection. After a protracted campaign, the city landmarked

Stonewall in 2015 and the two other sites in 2019. But they resisted landmarking Julius'.

But we didn't give up. We partnered with the Estate of Fred W. McDarragh to promote the landmarking campaign using the photographer's iconic photo of the "Sip-In," placed a plaque on the building honoring its history, and gave the business one of our annual Village Awards. Finally, on December 6, the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted unanimously to designate the site.

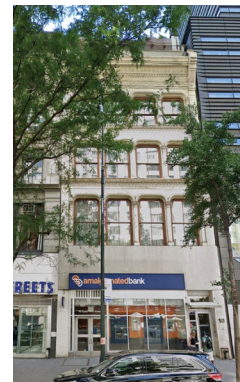
Yet there's more work to be done. The city claims it's now emphasizing diverse histories and civil rights sites like Julius' in its landmarks designations — something Village Preservation has been pushing for many years. In fact, we have many other such landmarking proposals in our neighborhoods that the city is currently ignoring, much as they did with Julius' for years.



**NEWLY LANDMARKED: JULIUS' BAR**

But we're working hard to get them that recognition and protection. This includes our proposed South of Union Square Historic District, which has dozens of critical LGBTQ+, African American, and women's history sites, such as the former headquarters of the NYC Woman Suffrage League at 10 West 14th Street and the first U.S. national gay rights organization at 80 Fifth Avenue. It also includes the home of one of 19th-century New York's leading African American crusaders for voting rights and abolition at 50 West 13th Street, and the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary at 218 Second Avenue, where major advancements in care and treatment for people with hearing and vision impairments have taken place for more than a century and a half.

So while we celebrate this long-overdue victory, we also push ahead with other much-needed landmark designations of overlooked and endangered historic sites in our neighborhood.



**STILL TO BE LANDMARKED, FROM LEFT: NEW YORK EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY, 50 WEST 13TH STREET, 80 FIFTH AVENUE, AND 10 WEST 14TH STREET**

**MORE INFO + TO HELP:** [villagepreservation.org/diversity](http://villagepreservation.org/diversity)



# VILLAGE VOICES 2022 — A SMASHING SUCCESS!

## *Public Outdoor Multi-Site Exhibit Raises Funds and Awareness*

This past fall, Village Preservation produced our second annual “Village Voices” — a multi-media, multi-site, interactive public outdoor exhibit that celebrates the ground-breaking history of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo, while serving as the organization’s annual fundraising benefit. The event was a tremendous success, engaging thousands about our neighborhoods’ rich and diverse stories of trailblazers and change-makers, while raising significant funds for our ongoing education, programming, and advocacy work.

Unveiled in September, Village Voices consisted of about two dozen site-specific installations around our neighborhoods. This included more than 20 “shadow boxes” with artifacts and artworks about important local historic figures and events connected to these sites, a 20-ft-high installation in the windows of 70 Fifth Avenue at 13th Street, and an interactive “Monument to Choice” at Gansevoort Plaza in the Meatpacking District, which allowed participants to make and share their own statements regarding free speech and freedom of choice. There

was also a gala kickoff at the newly renovated and reopened Jefferson Market Library, as well as multiple programs with partners including the Martha Graham Dance Company.

All shadow boxes contained scannable QR codes that allowed users to access audio

narrations and soundscapes further illuminating figures connected to the sites, including Leontyne Price, E.E. Cummings, James Baldwin, Jane Jacobs, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jackson Pollock, Edward Hopper, Patti Smith, Charlie Parker, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. Narrations were provided by prominent local residents and friends of Village Preservation, such as Rachel Maddow, John Leguizamo, Edward Norton, Jesse Eisenberg, Blythe Danner, Kathleen Chalfant, and Mark Ronson.

Our exhibit in the windows of 70 Fifth Avenue, done in conjunction with the New School (which owns the building), honored the work of W.E.B. DuBois, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Ida B. Wells, among other figures connected to the site. No. 70 Fifth Avenue served as the headquarters of the NAACP and *The Crisis* Magazine, along with an unparalleled array of other human rights and social justice organizations, in the early 20th century (Village Preservation waged a successful campaign to get the building landmarked in 2021).

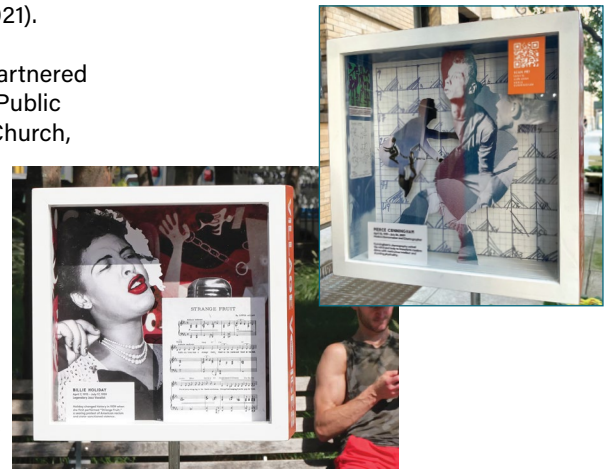
In addition to the New School, we partnered with great local institutions like the Public Theatre, St. Mark’s-in-the-Bowery Church, Westbeth, the New York Studio School, Washington Square Park Conservancy, and the Rauschenberg Foundation to make the installations possible, as well as Greenwich House to help spread the word.

Over the course of the more than six weeks this fall the exhibition was up, several thousand people — from



THIS YEAR’S EDITION OF VILLAGE VOICES OFFERED AN ARRAY OF INSTALLATIONS, FROM THE LARGE WINDOW DISPLAY AT 70 FIFTH AVENUE (ABOVE) TO SHADOW BOXES THAT FOCUSED ON LUMINARIES INCLUDING MERCE CUNNINGHAM AND BILLIE HOLIDAY (BELOW), AS WELL AS THE INTERACTIVE ‘MONUMENT TO CHOICE’ (LEFT).

longtime residents to tourists and visitors — engaged the installations and learned about the incredible history so deeply embedded in our neighborhoods. Thank you to everyone who participated and supported!



# SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

## Long-Standing Programs Expanded, New Ones and Surveys Added

Village Preservation has continued to make supporting and preserving small businesses throughout our neighborhoods a top priority.

Late last year we released *Crisis and Adaptation: Storefront Trends in the East Village*, a comprehensive report on how local retail came through the pandemic, along with partners the East Village Community Coalition and the Cooper Square Committee. Over many months, we surveyed 1,776 ground-floor commercial spaces throughout this neighborhood to compare conditions before the pandemic and after. Among the trends the survey found:

- While vacancies had increased, the problem was much more pronounced on major thoroughfares and less on smaller streets and side streets;
- Vacancies were much more prevalent in buildings with large landlords (who owned

multiple buildings) than in ones with small landlords; and

- More chain stores than independent shops had closed down during the pandemic, and more food service establishments than retail stores.

We also noted that vacancy rates were no worse in landmarked areas than nonlandmarked. This is valuable information as we continue to advocate for zoning that supports independent rather than chain businesses, landmark protections, and reasonably scaled development.

In addition, we grew our “Welcome to the Neighborhood” program, in which we publicize and support new, small, independent businesses in our neighborhoods to help ensure their success. This included the West Village’s Old Yew Plant Shop, which offers houseplants and landscaping, and Eva Joan, which provides tailoring and mending — both with a unique twist and very personal touch.

We also nearly doubled the size of our “Small Business, Big History” map and program, which promotes local small businesses while engaging the public around the fascinating histories to be found throughout Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. More than two dozen businesses are participating by posting flyers in their windows with scannable QR codes that connect you to the history behind the site of the store and all the other participants. All locations then also appear on our virtual map, which is regularly shared with our tens of thousands of e-newsletter subscribers and social-media followers, with each business individually promoted.



KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR OUR BUSINESS OF THE MONTH DECALS, GRACING THE FRONT DOORS OF SOME OF OUR FAVORITE STORES IN GREENWICH VILLAGE, THE EAST VILLAGE, AND NOHO.

And of course our very popular Business of the Month program continued, in which we promote and celebrate a long-standing local small business nominated by the public. In recent months we celebrated West Village stalwarts Elephant & Castle, Cafe Panino Much Giusto, and Moustache, as well as tiny East Village gems like The March Hare and Gaia Italian Cafe, among many others.

Our research showed vacancy rates were no worse in landmarked areas than in nonlandmarked, valuable information as we further our advocacy efforts on zoning.

[MORE INFO villagepreservation.org/smallbusiness](https://villagepreservation.org/smallbusiness)

## CRISIS AND ADAPTATION:



## Storefront Trends in the East Village, 2019–2021

Cooper Square Committee



Released July 2022

GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION VILLAGE PRESERVATION



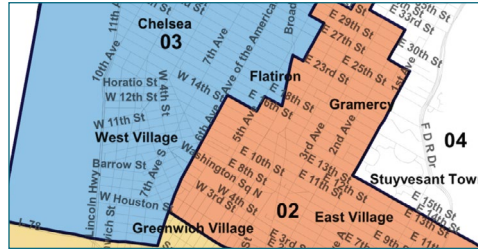
# REDISTRICTING SPLITS VILLAGE, CONTINUES INEQUALITY

Village Preservation led efforts to ensure that the decennial City Council redistricting did not unnecessarily split our neighborhoods between districts, and righted a long-standing wrong of giving our districts less voting power than most others across the city by “packing” them with the maximum number of residents legally allowable — many more than in other districts. Guided by the 2020 census and changes in population, the initial maps released by the Redistricting Commission did just what we called for — drew new lines that not only kept our neighborhoods largely intact, but gave our districts roughly equal voting power and population to almost every other district in the city.

But then under intense pressure from multiple quarters, including residents of the Upper East Side and Sutton Place who demanded changes to the Manhattan maps,

the lines were shifted, resulting in Greenwich Village being split at Sixth Avenue, between the 3rd District (currently represented by Erik Bottcher) to the west, and

of residents, thus diluting our voting power, in order to accommodate the wishes of East Side residents who didn't want to share a district with residents of western Queens.



NEW MAPS FOR CITY COUNCIL HIGHLIGHT THE DIVIDE IN GREENWICH VILLAGE BETWEEN THE 2ND DISTRICT (IN ORANGE) AND THE 3RD (IN BLUE).

the 2nd (currently represented by Carlina Rivera) to the east. Perhaps worse, all our neighborhoods were packed into districts with the maximum legally allowable number

This means we'll start the 10-year redistricting cycle with about 5% less voting power and representation in the City Council than residents of other parts of the city — a gap only likely to grow extensively due to large planned developments in our districts that will result in higher-than-average population growth compared to the rest of the city. The same dynamic had left some of our neighborhoods with 30% less voting power and representation than other parts of the city by the time of this redistricting. The new lines were approved by the City Council, and will define the boundaries of the districts that candidates will run to represent later this year.

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## SINGER LAWSUIT FAILS AFTER FIVE YEARS

In 1998, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani auctioned off the once-abandoned former P.S. 64 at 605 East 9th Street (east of Avenue B), which had for years been productively used by community group CHARAS/EI Bohio to offer much needed social and arts programs to the neighborhood. Developer Gregg Singer bought it and tried to tear the historic building down (even as it was being landmarked) and to site uses there which violated zoning regulations and the terms of a restrictive deed upon the property. Village Preservation, among many other East Village groups and leaders, fought these multiple attempts to destroy and compromise this beloved local landmark.

Five years ago, developer Gregg Singer sued Village Preservation (among many others), alleging our advocacy to prevent his destruction of the landmarked

East Village property and to build or install illegal uses there violated his rights. While ludicrous on its face and clearly intended to try to intimidate us and prevent our doing

keep us wrapped up in litigation even as judge after judge ruled against him.

Finally, in December 2022, Singer, who now also faces foreclosure proceedings against him for this property, had his appeal dismissed, ending his years of litigation against us. We continue to work with allied community and preservation organizations to ensure the former P.S. 64 is preserved and to advocate for its return to a real and productive community use, as it had for many years before Singer's purchase. Far from chastened by Singer's actions, we were emboldened; his lawsuit spurred the largest number of contributions to Village Preservation in the organization's history. Neither he nor any other

unscrupulous developer will dissuade us from continuing to fight for the preservation of our neighborhoods.



THE FORMER P.S. 64 BUILDING SHOULD ONCE AGAIN BECOME AN IMPORTANT SPACE FOR THE COMMUNITY.

the work at the core of our mission, Singer spent untold amounts of money dragging his case through the courts, attempting to

# In Brief

## NEW ARTIST ORAL HISTORIES

In late 2022, we released two wonderful new oral histories. One was with printmaker, painter, landscape architect and author Christina Maile, who has lived at Westbeth for more than half a century, and co-founded its Playwrights Feminist Collective. Her work has shown at the Brooklyn Museum and International Print Center, and often explores her Trinidadian and Malaysian heritage, landscapes, and gender. In her oral history, she discusses extensively how she came to Westbeth in the early 1970s and how it nurtured her growth as a fine artist.



MAILE



HARSLEY

The other is with Alex Harsley, who has curated the (East) 4th Street Photo Gallery since the early 1970s and founded nonprofit The Minority Photographers. His documentary photo career dates back to 1958 as the first black photographer for the NYC District Attorney, and has grown to include film, video, and digital sound, and subjects including musicians, politicians, street characters, and perhaps most importantly, the East Village neighborhood around him. Harsley talks in detail about his decades in the East Village and its artistic scene, how it's influenced him and how he has worked within it.

**EXPLORE THESE AND MORE THAN 60 OTHER ORAL HISTORIES IN OUR COLLECTION AT**  
[villagepreservation.org/oralhistories](https://villagepreservation.org/oralhistories)



## CIVIL RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE MAP: REVISED AND RELAUNCHED

In January 2017, we launched our Civil Rights and Social Justice Map, with roughly 100 sites connected to trailblazing figures and events in our neighborhoods. In late 2022 we updated, redesigned, and relaunched the map, now with over 200 sites connected to the civil rights struggles for African Americans, LGBTQ+ people, women, the Latinx community, Asian-Americans, Jews, and immigrants, as well as struggles for labor and other essential rights. The new map not only has more entries, information, and images, but is designed for clearer and more accessible use.

We're incredibly proud of the role our neighborhoods have played in transforming society for the better and in advancing equality. And we also take great pride in how our map has engaged people far and wide around this history. With nearly 200,000 views, the map has been used for virtual and in-person tours by educators and guides from across the country and world.

**EXPLORE** [villagepreservation.org/civilrightsmap](https://villagepreservation.org/civilrightsmap)

## PLAQUE HONORS GINSBERG + BURROUGHS

In October, we unveiled our 21st historic plaque marking the former home of Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs at 206 East 7th Street (between Avenues B and C), where they both lived early in their careers, and hosted (and famously photographed on the fire escape) Jack Kerouac. The site is incredibly important to the development of the Beat movement and downtown culture.



We were honored to be joined by scores of neighbors and admirers for the unveiling, and to have among our speakers noted Beat scholars and academics, associates of Ginsberg, and

renowned local poet Bob Holman. Our historic plaque program honors the great artists, activists, and places that have defined the transformative character of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo; sites include the former homes of Jane Jacobs, James Baldwin, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Lorraine Hansberry, Frank Stella, Martha Graham, Frank O'Hara, and Elizabeth Blackwell; the headquarters of the NAACP and *The Crisis Magazine*; Julius' Bar; and the Fillmore East, among many others.

**MORE AT** [villagepreservation.org/plaque](https://villagepreservation.org/plaque)

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### ANDREW BERMAN

A new year always brings new promise and new challenges. This past year proved that perseverance pays; after 10 years, we finally secured landmark designation for Julius' Bar, which spurs us to continue fighting for much-needed landmark protections for our proposed South of Union Square Historic District, the 13th Street Rep building at 50 West 13th Street, and the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, among others.



We also must get the city to do a much better job of protecting landmarked buildings, so more tragedies like 14 Gay Street don't occur — and we're working with preservation groups across the city to apply pressure on what has become a five-borough phenomenon. In 2023 we're also committed to demonstrating that opening the floodgates to building massive amounts of luxury housing won't help our city's affordability crisis, and in fact destroys neighborhood character and exacerbates unaffordability by destroying existing affordable rent-regulated housing and pushing out longer-term less-well-off residents, while raising prices overall. We have urged the city to instead consider targeted approaches to creating and retaining real affordable housing at appropriate scale and locations.

With the announcement of the Mayor's "Get Stuff Built" initiative, this will be a challenge, as we continue to see preservation de-emphasized and developer-driven real estate giveaways elevated. But as always, we're up for the fight. And with your support, we can win.

# Bulletin Board

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**VISIT OUR BLOG OFF THE GRID** for fun and fascinating glimpses into our neighborhoods' hidden history, eye-catching architecture, and colorful characters: [villagepreservation.org/blog](https://villagepreservation.org/blog).

**SEE THE LATEST APPLICATIONS FOR CHANGES TO LANDMARKED PROPERTIES** in our neighborhoods, and hundreds of past applications, at [villagepreservation.org/lpc](https://villagepreservation.org/lpc).

**GET WITH THE PROGRAM!** See all our upcoming lectures, book talks, panel discussions, and other programs, as well as thousands of videos and pictures from past programs, at [villagepreservation.org/programs](https://villagepreservation.org/programs).

**EXPLORE** thousands of historic photos in our Historic Image Archive at [villagepreservation.org/images](https://villagepreservation.org/images); dive into hundreds of sites of historic significance in our neighborhoods on our Greenwich Village Historic District Map, Women's Suffrage Map, and Greek Revival architecture map; and explore the history of 3,000+ buildings and themed tours on our East Village Building Blocks site — all at [villagepreservation.org/resources](https://villagepreservation.org/resources).

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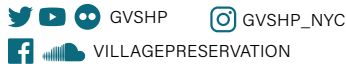




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**VILLAGE PRESERVATION** documents, celebrates, and preserves the special architectural and cultural heritage of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. Follow us on social media:



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