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June 12, 2023

Mayor Eric Adams
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

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

RE: Urgent Request for Evaluation for Theatre 80/78-80 St. Mark's Place, Manhattan

Dear Mayor Eric Adams and Hon. Sarah Carroll:

The Victorian Society New York sends this letter in support of the urgent request for evaluation for Theatre 80 St. Marks submitted by Village Preservation on April 25, 2023. We agree with Village Preservation that Theatre 80, at 78-80 St. Mark's Place in Manhattan, is worthy of individual landmark designation based on cultural and historic as well as architectural grounds. We urge that the Commission look as well at interior designation of significant public spaces in the building, including the theater interior and the William Barnacle Tavern, originally known as Scheib's Place, a prohibition-era speakeasy. Considerable material from the speakeasy may be intact, as illustrated in a photograph accompanying a New York Times article:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/30/theater/theater-80-st-marks-nyc.html>

The Commission in the past designated many legitimate theaters as both interior and individual landmarks. Many of these theaters are significant architecturally, but an important component of their designations was always their historic and cultural significance. This significance relates not only to the specific shows performed and the actors who appeared, but also to the larger significance of the theater as a touchstone of New York's place as the cultural center of the United States and one of the most important centers for theater in the world. It's time to consider more of the off-Broadway venues that also contribute to that history. Besides its city-wide importance in that regard, Theater 80 also reflects the importance of the East Village as an avant-garde cultural center beginning in the mid-20th century. And the speakeasy "speaks" to an earlier era still.

Today, anyone who attends a show on Broadway should stop to thank the Landmarks Commission of the 1980s for the fact that the theater they are in is likely an individual or interior landmark or both. If the Commission hadn't acted back then, there is a very good chance that theater would no longer exist. It would likely have been replaced by

an office or apartment tower, perhaps with an enormous, acoustically deficient, and featureless new theater in the cellar. The Commission has always been about more than designating architectural treasures. Theatre 80 is an example of an important cultural and historic resource, not without architectural significance as well. It should be protected.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Woodoff, co-chair
John Graham, co-chair
Preservation Committee, for
The Victorian Society New York