

LOWER EAST SIDE BELOW DELANCEY ST. SUPPORT FOR HISTORICAL DESIGNATION

The Lower East Side of Manhattan, long recognized as the iconic neighborhood to which millions of Americans can trace their roots, has embodied the hopes and struggles of generations of newcomers to the United States from many countries around the world.

The area was once home to enslaved and free Africans, followed by large waves of Irish, German, and southern Italian immigrants; as well as Eastern European Jews and Sephardic Jews (from such places as Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and Syria) fleeing starvation, political turmoil, oppression, and economic deprivation. Parts of the Lower East Side also served as burial grounds for enslaved and free Africans at a time when cemeteries were segregated.

Since the 1960s, large and varied Latino and Asian communities continue to mark another chapter in the multi-ethnic history of the Lower East Side as a first stop for people seeking a better life for themselves and their children in the land of freedom and opportunity.

As a primary center of immigration, the neighborhood has nurtured trailblazing and world renowned figures in the fields of music, art, literature, entertainment, social reform and political activism exemplified by George Gershwin, Louise Nevelson, Abraham Cahan, Eddie Cantor, Lillian D. Wald and Senator Jacob Javits.

The proposed historic district, encompassing an area from Delancey to Canal Streets, between Essex and Forsyth Streets, evidences a once and still thriving ethnically diverse immigrant neighborhood, one that also has been celebrated as the heart of the American Jewish experience.

Like no other neighborhood in the city, its intact streetscapes offer a brick-and-mortar lesson in both the historical plight of the immigrant poor and society's response to those horrid conditions.

Time is of the essence if we are to be able to preserve even the relatively small intact areas below Delancey Street, which by their architectural and cultural significance, represent a crucial and momentous chapter in the history of our city, state and nation.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, we call upon the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission to landmark, without delay, the historically intact areas of the Lower East Side below Delancey Street.

DOWNTOWN INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

Vote: Unanimous
November 15, 2015