

BRAD HOYLMAN  
27TH SENATE DISTRICT



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**TESTIMONY OF STATE SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN**  
**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**REGARDING THE PROPOSED SOUTH VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

**June 25, 2013**

My name is Brad Hoylman and I represent New York State's 27<sup>th</sup> Senate District, in which much of the proposed South Village Historic District is located. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony before the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) today.

As you know, the proposed South Village Historic District, which is roughly bounded by West 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Houston Street between LaGuardia Place and Sixth Avenue, consists of approximately 250 buildings, including row houses, tenements, commercial structures, and institutions, that represent the unique development of New York City. This area has transformed itself several times, beginning as a fashionable residential neighborhood on the outskirts of the city in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, evolving into a haven for working-class immigrants and eventually becoming a hotbed of political and social revolution.

Several early houses remain from the 1820's and 1830's when the South Village was developed to be an affluent residential district, notably the relatively tall late-Federal Style buildings on the north side of Bleecker Street, as well as the Gothic Revival-style houses on MacDougal Street. By the 1850's the area underwent its first transformation, as immigrants moved in and wealthier residents moved further uptown, encouraging the conversion of many of the row houses into multi-family residences and the construction of new tenements, many of which are still in evidence today. These tenements were of varying styles, including pre-law Italianate and Neo-Grec-style buildings built during the 1860's and 1870's, the same period in which the blocks around Minetta Street and Minetta Lane developed into "Little Africa," then the largest African-American community in New York.

Throughout the following few decades, the neo-Grec style remained popular as did the incorporation of Queen Anne details, including molded terra-cotta detailing, textured brickwork, projecting piers and massed cornices. These popular elements continued through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the later addition of the Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival styles. The South Village also underwent another transformation during this period, as newly-arrived Italian immigrants began to call the area home.



While the district contains some notably intact 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings, there are also some early 20<sup>th</sup> Century renovations and modifications that contribute to the distinctive character of the neighborhood. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the South Village became the epicenter of early lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender life in the City and was discovered by the bohemian and, eventually, counter-culture movements. These new residents transformed the area into a center of the cultural revolution, and the neighborhood's jazz clubs, coffee shops and small-theaters helped permanently alter American art, literature and music.

The proposed South Village Historic District is undeniably worthy of designation. It has a largely-intact, historic architectural landscape that reflects the succession of quintessential New York constituencies that settled there. I strongly urge LPC to approve it.

I also urge LPC to move forward with designation of the final portion of the South Village Historic District as it was proposed in a 2006 report by Andrew S. Dolkart. The Edgar Allen Poe House, formerly located at 85 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, would surely have been included in the application before LPC today, had it not been torn down before the Commission acted. The loss of the historic home of one America's great writers can never be undone, and is emblematic of what is at stake, given the development pressures on the remaining sections of the South Village. I understand the limits of LPC's resources, but given imminent threats to buildings in the proposed district south of Houston Street, LPC must act expeditiously to ensure that it too is protected under New York City's Landmarks Law.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Manhattan Community Board 2 and the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation for their advocacy for the historic designation of the entire South Village.

I appreciate LPC's dedication to preserving our City's heritage and thank you again for the opportunity to testify.