



Greenwich  
Village  
Society for  
Historic  
Preservation

232 East 11th Street  
New York, New York 10005

(212) 475-9585  
fax: (212) 475-9582  
www.gvshp.org

*Executive Director*  
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## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

April 10, 2011

Contact: Andrew Berman, Executive Director, GVSHP  
917-533-1767 or 212-475-9585 x38 or [aberman@gvshp.org](mailto:aberman@gvshp.org)

### **VILLAGERS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND PRESERVATIONISTS CALL UPON CITY TO LANDMARK SOUTH VILLAGE RIGHT AWAY, BEFORE MORE OF NEIGHBORHOOD'S THREATENED HISTORIC LANDMARKS ARE LOST**

Manhattan – The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP), City Councilmember Margaret Chin, the Historic Districts Council, and more than a dozen local community groups were joined by scores of Villagers today to call upon the City to move ahead with the long-promised landmark designation of the entire South Village neighborhood (see attached flyer for complete list of co-sponsors). This non-landmarked area of Greenwich Village south of Washington Square was ground zero for the Beat Movement and Folk Revival in the 1950's and 1960's, and home for generations to countless immigrants, mostly from Italy, who began their lives in America here.

In the 1960's, Village leaders including Jane Jacobs fought unsuccessfully to have the area included in the Greenwich Village Historic District, which was designated in 1969. In 2002, GVSHP again approached the City about securing landmark designation for the neighborhood, and in 2006, GVSHP submitted a formal proposal for landmark designation of the neighborhood with proposed boundaries (see attached map). In 2007, the NY State Historic Preservation Office ruled the neighborhood eligible for the State and National Register of Historic Places (see attached). In 2009 the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission committed to considering the first third of the proposed district immediately, and to consider the remaining two-thirds shortly thereafter. In 2010, the City designated the first third of the proposed district, but is yet to follow up on its commitment to consider the remainder.

The need for designation is made more urgent by threats to several historic landmarks in the area. The Children's Aid Society has begun to seek developers to buy its multi-building campus on Sullivan Street in the heart of the proposed South Village Historic District; without designation, buildings by renowned Central Park architect Calvert Vaux could be destroyed and replaced with a high-rise tower (see attached image). Another building in the proposed district at Thompson and Spring Streets is slated for demolition, while a gaping whole in a row of 1861 rowhouses on Bleeker Street – the result of demolition of a house in 2009 due to lack of action by the Landmarks Preservation Commission – could be replaced with a completely inappropriate new building without landmark designation. Other important landmarks destroyed in recent years while the neighborhood has awaited landmark designation include the Poe House, the Judson Houses, the Provincetown Playhouse & Apartments, Circle in the Square Theater, the Sullivan Street Playhouse, and the Tunnel Garage (see attached).

-more-

1980-2010

Our 30th Anniversary Year



"The South Village remains one of America's great historic neighborhoods, with an unrivalled record of immigrant struggle and success, working-class architecture and institutions, and some of the most dynamic and influential sources of cultural innovation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century," stated Andrew Berman, Executive Director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, which has been spearheading the drive to landmark the neighborhood. "But it's hanging by a thread. Each day it seems we lose more of our remarkable history, and each day the City tells us we must wait a little longer until the long-promised and long-overdue consideration of landmark designation takes place. The threats the neighborhood faces right now – such as the wholesale demolition of the Children's Aid Society and its replacement with high-rise development, is reason enough for the City to move right now on landmark designation, before it's too late," he added.

Said City Councilmember Margaret Chin, who represents much of the area, including the Children's Aid Society site: "I stand with the community and advocates in calling for the expansion of the South Village landmark district. We must protect these architecturally and historically important buildings from speculative development and potential ruin. I am committed to maintaining the unique character of the South Village neighborhood. The diversity and authenticity of our neighborhoods is what makes New York City great. In the face of encroaching new development, we must protect the integrity of our neighborhoods and honor the rich history of our city."

"How much more of the South Village are we going to lose waiting for the City to do the right thing and landmark the area?," said Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director of the Historic Districts Council, NYC's Citywide Advocate for Historic Neighborhoods.

"Without landmark preservation we will surely lose the South Village, this essential link to the story of New York, the still-extant buildings which housed the waves of immigrants who populated our community in the early 20th century," said Jonathan L. Geballe, President, Village Independent Democrats.

"A city deserves the culture it creates. And the culture it preserves. The Bohemian and Italian immigrant cultures of the South Village, and the associated architecture, once destroyed, can never be replaced. We urge the City to turn its eyes, not only to the grand monuments of the Carnegies and the Astors and the Coopers, but to the homes and institutions of those anonymous souls who built this country, and built its culture," said Sean Sweeney, Director, SoHo Alliance.

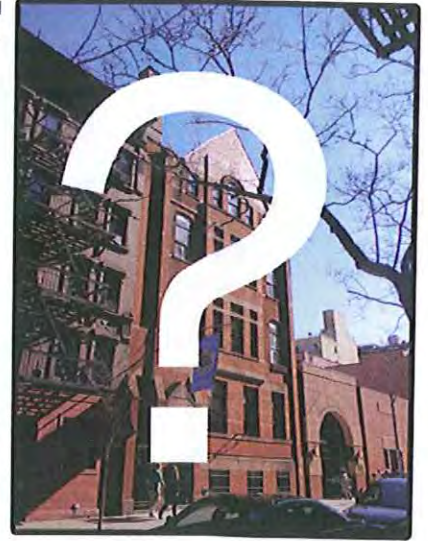
"Educational space is so scarce in our city that it seems a tragedy to tear down the Children's Aid Society buildings, which are an amazing community center and school. This beautiful facility currently serves 1,500 children a year, has a long and vibrant history of community service, and boasts historical significance because 219 Sullivan's architect was Central Park co-designer Calvert Vaux. It deserves protection and preservation," said Heather Campbell of Save A Village Education (SAVE), a community group seeking to prevent the loss of services provided by the Children's Aid Society.

"As past-President of the American Italian Historical Association and a founding member of the American Italian Coalition of Organizations, I feel we have neglected the contributions of immigrants and the working class to our city. All around town important or simply pleasing structures and spaces disappear and are replaced with, often ugly things, things that are called "improvements." We have already lost too much in the South Village. There are few neighborhoods in the world that can rival the South Village. We must give New Yorkers paths through streetscapes that honor our city's working class and immigrant history," said Jerome Krase, Ph.D., Emeritus and Murray Koppelman Professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY.



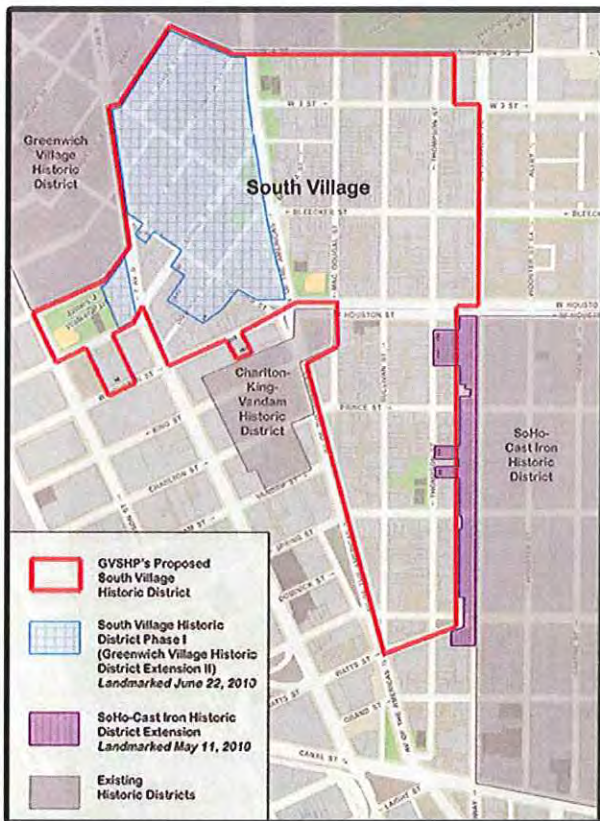
The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation urges you to attend a

# RALLY TO LANDMARK THE SOUTH VILLAGE



*Children's Aid Society buildings – threatened*

Join us and elected officials, community and business leaders, and preservationists to call upon the City to landmark the remainder of the South Village, and save this historic neighborhood from further destruction and out-of-scale new development.



**SUNDAY, APRIL 10  
AT 1 P.M.  
SULLIVAN STREET,  
between Bleecker and West 3rd Streets**

Co-sponsored by:

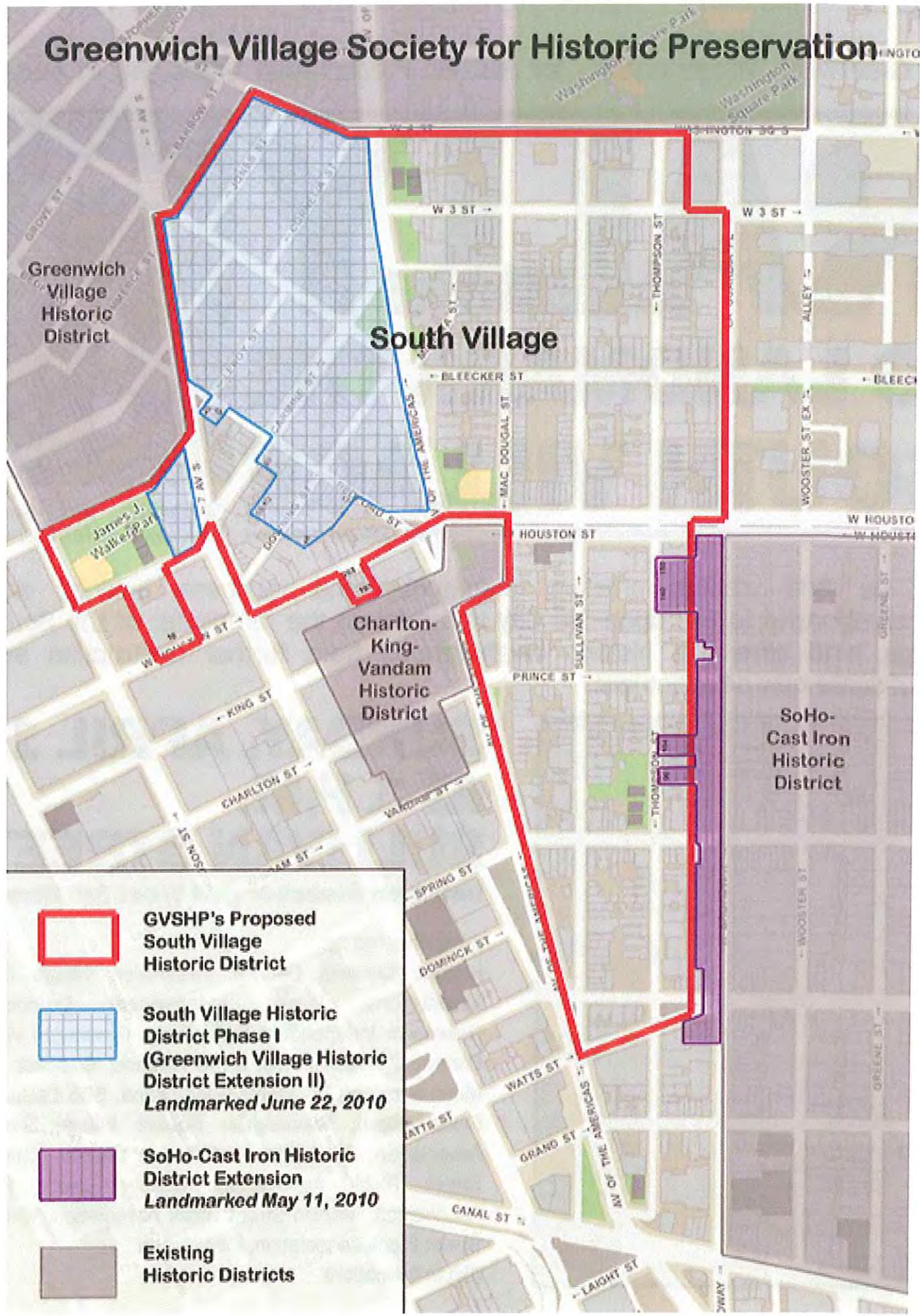
Historic Districts Council, Greenwich Village Block Associations, Village Independent Democrats, Downtown Independent Democrats, Greenwich Village Community Task Force, SoHo Alliance, Bleecker Area Merchants and Residents Association, 505 LaGuardia Place Board, Washington Square Village Tenants Association, St. Anthony of Padua Church, Charlton Street Block Association, Mercer Street Block Association, Morton Street Block Association, Vandam Street Block Association, Film Forum

(list in formation)

**For more information, visit [www.gvshp.org/sovil4-10-11](http://www.gvshp.org/sovil4-10-11)**



# Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation



**GVSHP's Proposed South Village Historic District**



**South Village Historic District Phase I (Greenwich Village Historic District Extension II)**  
*Landmarked June 22, 2010*



**SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension**  
*Landmarked May 11, 2010*



**Existing Historic Districts**





## New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189  
518-237-8643  
www.nysparks.com

Eliot Spitzer  
Governor

Carol Ash  
Commissioner

May 1, 2007

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director  
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation  
232 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10003

RE: Proposed South Village Historic District  
State and National Registers Application  
New York County, NY

Dear Mr. Berman:

Thank you for your interest in seeking State and National Registers listing for the proposed South Village Historic District. I very much enjoyed touring the area with you and Melissa Baldock last month. Andrew Dolkart's report *The South Village: A Proposal for Historic District Designation* (2006) is quite thorough and the arguments presented for the cultural, historical and architectural significance of the proposed district are compelling. Based on my site visit, the documentation provided, and further in-house review, it is the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office that that proposed South Village Historic District appears to meet the criteria for listing to the National Register of Historic Places. The Resource Evaluation and district map showing the boundaries are enclosed with this letter.

If you are interested in pursuing listing at this time I heartily encourage you to proceed with the completion of a National Register nomination. The GVSHP, as the sponsor of the nomination, will be responsible for preparing the nomination including two sets of black and white photos. We will need to receive from you the names and mailing addresses of all owners within the district boundaries for notification purposes.

As always, we encourage you to seek the support of community groups and property owners. As you know, a district cannot be listed on the National Register if the majority of the owners object to listing so it is important to work with the owners early in the process to explain the benefits of listing. The GVSHP will need to schedule a public informational meeting - about one month prior to the State Review Board meeting - so SHPO staff can explain what listing means to the property owners and answer questions.

Please give me a call at (518) 237-8643, extension 3266, or email me at [kathy.howe@oprhp.state.ny.us](mailto:kathy.howe@oprhp.state.ny.us) so we can further discuss the National Register process and the

schedule. I look forward to working with you on the South Village Historic District. I will be responsible for continuing to assist you in developing the nomination, presenting the proposal to the Review Board, and processing the final submission to the National Park Service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen A. Howe". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Kathleen A. Howe  
Historic Preservation Specialist

cc: Andrew S. Dolkart  
Tania Werbizky, Preservation League of New York State

enc.



**New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

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**Eliot Spitzer**  
Governor

**Carol Ash**  
Commissioner

## RESOURCE EVALUATION

DATE: May 1, 2007

STAFF: Kathy Howe

PROPERTY: South Village Historic District

MCD: Manhattan

ADDRESS: (see attached district map)

COUNTY: New York Co.

USN: 06101.016146

- I.  Property is individually listed on SR/NR:  
name of listing:
- Property is a contributing component of a SR/NR district:  
name of district:
- II.  Property meets eligibility criteria.
- Property contributes to a district which appears to meet eligibility criteria.
- Pre SRB:  Post SRB:  SRB date

### Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

- A.  Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- B.  Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C.  Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possess high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- D.  Have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The South Village Historic District encompasses approximately 800 buildings in the neighborhood situated south of Washington Square Park. The proposed district abuts three National Register listed districts: the large Greenwich Village Historic District to the north; the compact Charlton-King-Vandam Historic District on the west; and the SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District on the east. The boundaries of the South Village Historic District are indicated on the attached district map.

The streets of the district are lined with a rich array of buildings of architectural, historical, and cultural significance. While late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century tenements are the dominant building type in the district, its converted early-19<sup>th</sup> century row houses, churches, reform housing, institutional and civic



buildings, back buildings, garages, and lofts also reflect the working-class and immigrant communities of the South Village. Overall the buildings in the district possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The neighborhood served as the center of New York's African-American community in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. By the late-19<sup>th</sup> century many Italian immigrants lived and worked here as well as Germans and Irish. Beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century and continuing beyond the post-World War II era the South Village has been the setting of important counter-cultural movements, institutions, and trends including the bohemian era, jazz clubs, gay bars, off-Broadway theater, Beat culture, and the folk music revival.

The district's period of significance - ca. 1820 to the mid-1960s - incorporates the architectural, historical, and cultural evolution of the neighborhood. The district meets Criterion A in the areas of social history and ethnic heritage. Additional areas of significance may be identified as research on the district continues. It also meets Criterion C, most notably for its collection of pre-law, old law, and new law tenements in a range of popular styles including Neo-Grec, Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Beaux Arts. Many of these retain their historic wood and glass storefronts. Row houses (many transformed to commercial and multi-family uses), churches, institutional and ecclesiastical buildings, and other structures also add to the architectural significance of the district. The South Village Historic District retains an extraordinary collection of buildings and structures that reflects the physical and historical development of this working-class neighborhood.





169 BLEECKER

NO PARKING  
11AM TO 12:30PM  
MON & THURS

ONE WAY

BLEECKER ST

ONE WAY

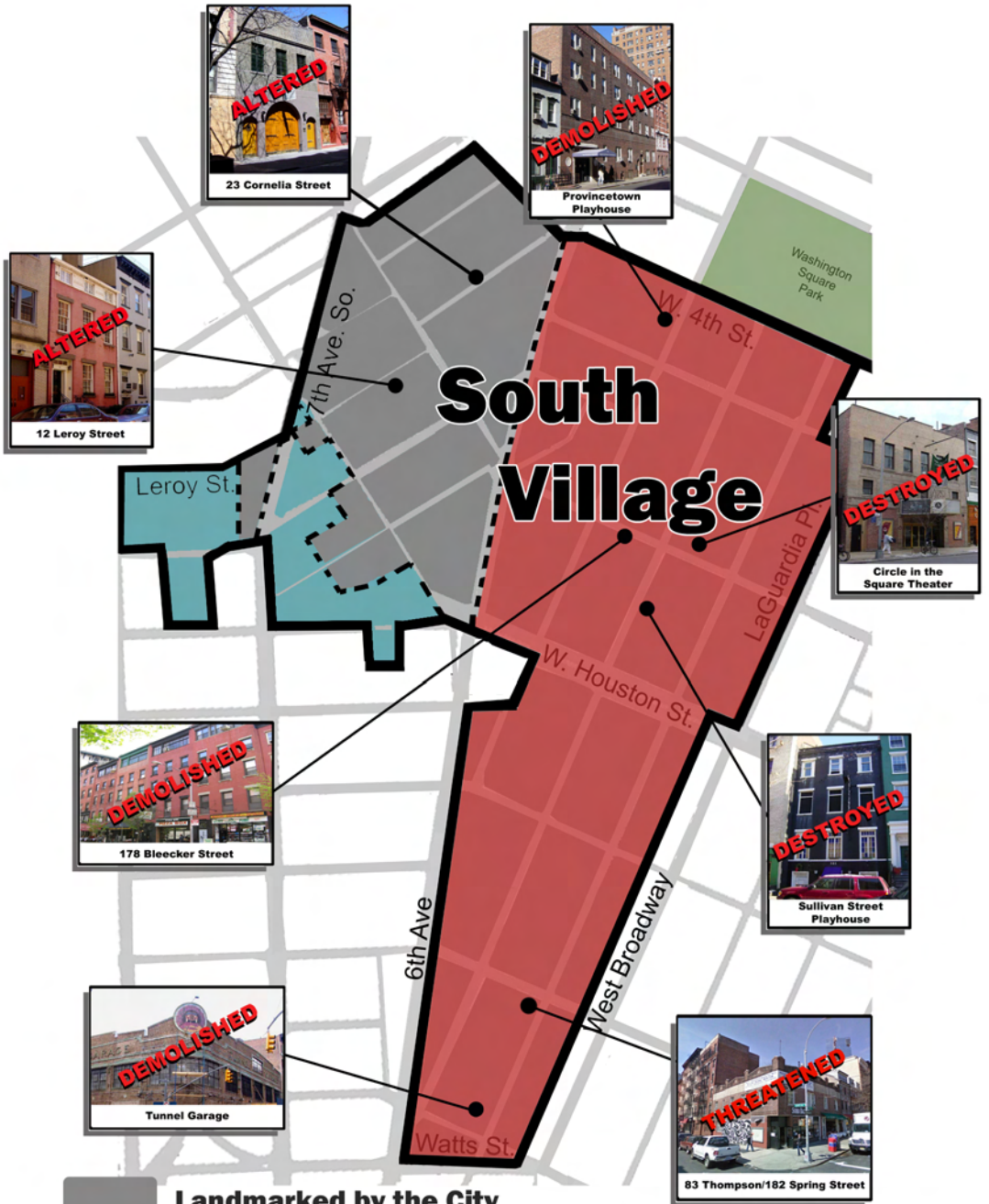
BLEECKER ST

169 BLEECKER  
THUNDER JACKSONS  
URBAN ROADHOUSE

THUNDER JACKSONS URBAN ROADHOUSE

VILLAGE CENTER  
VILLAGE LANTERN





**Landmarked by the City**

**Non-Landmarked**

**Unprotected**



# South Village Preservation and Destruction



Village activists and Jane Jacobs seek landmark designation for the South Village



Poe House demolished



Circle in the Square Theater destroyed without landmark status



Sullivan Street Playhouse destroyed without landmark status



178 Bleecker Street, 1861 rowhouse in heart of South Village, demolished without landmark status



LPC refuses to commit to move ahead with remaining two-thirds of promised South Village Historic District

GVSHP documents history of all 750 buildings in South Village for LPC to help get landmark status

NY State says South Village qualifies for State and National Registers of Historic Places

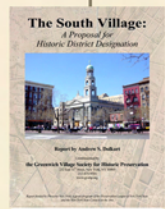


Judson House demolished

Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation meets with Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to seek landmark designation for South Village



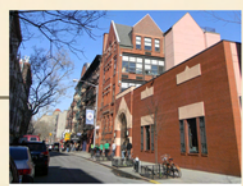
Historic Tunnel Garage demolished without landmark status



GVSHP submits proposed South Village Historic District boundaries to LPC, 90 page report



NYU begins demolition of Provincetown Playhouse and Apartments without landmark status



Children's Aid Society announces plan to sell campus in South Village; without landmark designation, historic buildings could be demolished and replaced with large tower

LPC designates first third of proposed South Village Historic District, gives no timeline for remaining 2/3



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March 29, 2011

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair  
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission  
One Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Tierney,

I write to call to your attention recently-filed plans to demolish 182 Spring Street/83 Thompson Street, in the proposed South Village Historic District we submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 2006, and replace it with a seven-story structure. In light of these plans for demolition and new development of yet another structure within the proposed district, I again urge the Commission to keep its commitment to consider the area for landmark designation.

On numerous occasions over the last two years, you have stated that the entirety of the proposed South Village Historic District would be considered for designation by the Commission, and that such consideration would closely follow consideration of the first third of the district. Threats to the historic fabric of the South Village continue to mount, even as we await promised action by the Commission.

There is virtually unanimous support for designation of the proposed district among stakeholders, preservation organizations, neighborhood business and property owners and community leaders, and the elected officials and the community board which represent the area. After several years of painstaking research, GVSHP has compiled primary source documentation of the history of every building in the proposed district which we have offered to share with the Commission, making the job of formal consideration of landmark designation considerably easier. It is therefore difficult to imagine any reason not to move forward with consideration of proposed district right away.

The South Village has historically contained an extraordinarily intact record of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century New York, of our city's earliest wave of development and its transformation as a magnet for large-scale immigration, and of some of the most influential social and cultural movements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, in recent years as we have fought for landmark designation, the neighborhood has suffered loss after loss of key historic sites, from the Provincetown Playhouse and Apartments to the Circle in the Square Theater, the Sullivan Street Playhouse to the Tunnel Garage, 178 Bleeker Street to 168 Thompson Street, not to mention countless alterations which have compromised existing historic structures.

In light of the Landmarks Preservation Commission's mission to safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic, and cultural heritage, and in light of the growing list of



threats to the area, I urge you to move ahead with consideration of the remainder of the proposed South Village Historic District right away.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman  
Executive Director

Cc: National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Preservation League of NY State  
Municipal Art Society  
NY Landmarks Conservancy  
Historic Districts Council  
Central Village Block Association  
SoHo Alliance  
Bleecker Area Merchants and Residents Association  
Charlton Street Block Association  
VanDam Street Block Association  
Congressman Jerrold Nadler  
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer  
State Senator Thomas K. Duane  
Assemblymember Deborah Glick  
City Council Speaker Christine Quinn  
City Councilmember Margaret Chin  
Sean Sweeney, Community Board #2, Manhattan, Landmarks Committee



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Henry Hope Reed  
Martica Sawin Fitch  
Anne Marie Summer  
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Jean-Claude van Ballie  
George Vellonakis  
Vicki Weiner  
Anthony C. Wood

December 1, 2010

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair  
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
One Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: New Danger to Proposed South Village Historic District**

Dear Chair Tierney:

I write to bring to your attention that the Children's Aid Society is seeking to sell the Coltoff Center, its properties on Sullivan Street in the proposed South Village Historic District.

As you know, lacking landmark protections, sale of these properties covering several lots in the heart of the South Village would likely lead to demolition of the buildings, some of which were designed by Calvert Vaux. New development under the current zoning would likely be unsympathetic to and out of context with its surroundings.

For these reasons, I urge you to move forward as quickly as possible with formal consideration of landmark designation of the remainder of the proposed South Village Historic District. The danger of not moving swiftly is not only the potential loss of these properties in the heart of the South Village and their replacement with out-of-context and out-of-scale new development. If the Children's Aid Society does in fact move ahead with sale of the properties, it would be much fairer and more helpful to all involved if the status of the properties as landmarked were clear from the beginning, rather than if it were to change after purchase, potentially leading to hardship cases or other resistance to the requirements of landmark designation.

As you know, preservationists and neighborhood advocates have pushed for designation of this area since the 1960's; GVSHP has been in conversation with the Commission about designation since 2002, and formally submitted a proposal for landmark designation in 2006. In 2009, when the Commission held a hearing on the first third of the proposed South Village Historic District, we were told that further action on the remainder of the proposed district would follow shortly after.

Too many buildings have already been lost or compromised in the South Village, and too much unsympathetic and inappropriate new development and alterations have already taken place. I hope the Commission will act before an even greater loss to this neighborhood's historic character happens here.

Sincerely,

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director