CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES

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February 7, 2017 Start: 11:51 a.m. Recess: 12:19 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,

16th Fl.

B E F O R E:

PETER A. KOO Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Annabel Palma
Deborah L. Rose
Rosie Mendez
Stephen T. Levin
Inez D. Barron

Ben Kallos

David G. Greenfield

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Lauren George
Director
Intergovernmental and Community Affairs
NYC Landmark Preservation Commission

Lisa Kersavage
Director of Strategic Planning and
Special Projects
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

Sarah Bean Apmann Director Research & Preservation Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director
Historic Districts Council

Joseph Rosenberg
Executive Director
Catholic Community Relations Council

Joseph Lopez Representing Thompson Assets

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND 1 MARITIME USES 3 2 [sound check] 3 [pause] 4 [background comments] 5 [gavel] 6 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Good morning everyone; 7 we're going to start this subcommittee meeting. 8 [gavel] 9 Hi everyone, I am Council Member Koo, Chair of the Subcommittee of Landmarks, Public Siting 10 11 and Maritime Uses. We are joined by Council Members 12 Kallos, Barron and Palma, and also joined by Chair of the Land Use Committee, David ... 13 14 We will be holding a public hearing on 15 voting on the designation of the Landmarks 16 Preservation Commission of the Sullivan-Thompson 17 Historic District (N 170201 HKM) pursuant to Section 18 3020 of the City Charter. 19 The Sullivan-Thompson Historic District 20 consists of approximately 157 buildings generally 21 bounded by West Houston Street, West Broadway, Watts 2.2 Street, and Avenue of the Americas. The Sullivan-23 Thompson Historic District is significant for its 24 important cultural history and its varying

streetscapes. They [sic] refer to waves of

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES

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immigration that transformed its neighborhood in the period between the early 19th century and the Great Depression, when most of the development within the district occurred.

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The buildings in this historic district vary in type, scale and materials; they include row houses, tenements, commercial structures and institutions. The historic district's streetscapes illustrate the growth of the neighborhood from its origins as a residential row house neighborhood in the early 19th century to a vibrant Italian-American neighborhood in the early 20th century.

I have a statement from Council Member

Johnson and Council Member Chin to support this

designation and they asked me to read this statement

for them.

This is a statement from Council Members

Corey Johnson and Margaret Chin regarding the

designation of the Sullivan-Thompson Historic

District, February 7, 2017.

"As Council Members who have the privilege of representing the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District as representatives of the 1st and the 3rd Council Districts, we are united in our

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES support for this designation. The special sense of place and time that one experiences in the South Village is unmistakable; its historic blocks reflect the immigrant stories in our city and our nation, when an extraordinary influx of people from around the world came to America to pursue a dream of opportunity and freedom; many settled in the South Village, the every day experiences reverberate through the architecture that still stands to this day. Our connection to the immigrant experience is one of our own greatest defining characteristics as a city and is on full display in the proposed Sullivan-Thompson Historic District. Honoring this history will benefit current and future generations in enormously profound ways.

Additionally, without its designation as a historic district, we fear that this neighborhood will surely lose some of its most important features to mounting development pressures that are increasing all around it.

We would like to thank the Landmarks

Preservation Commission for their extraordinary work

on this proposal. We would also like to recognize

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the long and tireless efforts of community advocates who have shown this designation for over a decade.

Thank you, Chair Koo and members of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses for your consideration of what will be most welcome historic district in the South Village."

Thanks for the statement from Council Member Johnson and Council Member Chin.

Now we will open the public hearing on this item. We have Lisa Kersavage and Lauren George from LPC to testify. Please identify yourself and then start.

LAUREN GEORGE: Thank you, Chair Koo;
members of the Committee. Good morning. It is our
pleasure to be here today -- oh goodness -- hi, I
don't know what happened to the -- okay, good; at
least yours is visually working, right? Okay.
Sorry. So good morning; my name is Lauren George,
Director of Intergovernmental and Community Affairs
at Landmarks Preservation Commission; delighted to be
here today to share with you some information about
the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District.

So as the Chair has spoken already, this district consists of 157 buildings, including row

houses, tenements and commercial structures and institutional buildings, with streetscapes that illustrate the growth of the neighborhood from its origin as a residential row house enclave in the early 19th century to a vibrant working-class Italian-American neighborhood in the early 20th century. The architecture in this district reflects waves of immigration that transformed the neighborhood and much of New York City, beginning around the mid 19th century.

Sullivan-Thompson Historic District is roughly bound by West Houston to the north, Watts to the south, Avenue of the Americas to the west, and Thompson Street to the east. Last summer, in response to requests from the community, LPC surveyed the area; after extensive research that factored in building dates, typology and integrity, staff proposed a district within the red boundaries of this map. The area was designated as the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District by unanimous vote of the Commission on December 13, 2016.

I'd like to share with you some of the development history in the neighborhood and then

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES 8

we'll review the analysis of buildings that went into this district.

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Between 1810 and 1840, this area more than tripled in population, from fewer than 10,000 residents to nearly 30,000. The district's earlier houses are characteristic of the Federal style, with later row houses reflecting the popularity of the Green Revival style.

The beginning of the mid 19th century, a severe housing shortage led to layers of alterations to the district's built fabric, reflecting successive waves of immigration. Common alterations included altering the attic stories to full height, adding whole floors, constructing rear extensions and incorporating storefronts. In addition to the conversion of the existing housing stock, by the 1850s to 1870s purpose-built tenements were constructed here to house the area's growing workingclass and immigrant populations. In addition to European immigrants, the blocks of this district were also home to a sizable African-American population. In the heart of what was considered Little Africa, Sullivan Street between Broome and Spring had significant numbers of buildings of African-American

tenants by 1870. Black and Tan Saloon served a multiracial clientele in the neighborhood.

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By the 1890s, the area was one of the most densely populated Italian communities in New York's history. Italian immigrants forged a vibrant community here, anchored by the Church of St. Anthony of Padua and a number of Italian-owned businesses, and a new level of housing reform was achieved at the turn of the century, with the Tenement House Act of 1901, known as the "new law," which was the result of greater public awareness of the substandard housing conditions persisting the city's tenements.

With the Sullivan-Thompson Historic

District within the district, over 30 tenements were

built after the passage of the Tenement House Act of

1901. The last tenement to be constructed in the

district was built in 1914.

Now we'll look at some of our analysis underpinning the designation.

LPC examined typology of buildings in the district and as this map illustrates, the district consists primarily of residential buildings with a few institutional and commercial buildings mixed in.

The area's residential buildings consist of row

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houses, tenements and apartment buildings -- shown here.

The major waves of construction in the neighborhood led us to a period of significance for this historic district, from the early 19th century to the Great Depression. Properties built prior to 1850 include primarily Federal row houses and include the five existing landmarks within the Sullivan-Thompson District.

The neighborhood's pre-law tenements, from 1851-1878; the neighborhood's old law tenements, from 1879-1900; and as I mentioned, a significant portion of the district's buildings are new law tenements, from 1901-1916, which is 47 buildings.

After 1916, new construction dropped off dramatically, only one building was built between 1916 and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. However, many of the neighborhood's row houses continued to undergo alterations that contribute to the significance of the neighborhood.

The district includes a number of in-tact storefronts, historic storefronts, and many others that retain some historic elements. These historic storefronts are a defining characteristic of the

neighborhood that express its commercial and immigrant history.

The Sullivan-Thompson District, as we've said, includes row houses and tenements that represent more than 100 years of construction and design; although the area is no longer predominantly an immigrant community, its heritage continues to be reflected in its buildings. The Sullivan-Thompson District is a distinctive enclave that retains the unique sense of place. The Landmarks Preservation Commission urges you to affirm our designation today. Thank you and we're available for any questions.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: I have one question for you.

LAUREN GEORGE: Uhm-hm.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: So do we have any one opposed to the designation in the public hearing?

LISA KERSAVAGE: My name is Lisa

Kersavage; I'm the Director of Strategic Planning and

Special Projects at Landmarks.

So at the public hearing on November 29th we had 28 people that spoke in support and we had 4 that testified in opposition; they were the

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- SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES 12
- 2 Archdiocese of New York and 3 additional property 3 owners.
- CHAIRPERSON KOO: Now we have Mr. Simeon

 Bankoff and Sarah Bean Apmann to testify.

 [background comments] Yeah, please identify yourself

SARAH BEAN APMANN: Okay. Good afternoon, I'm Sarah Bean Apmann of Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP). The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preser... -- thank you -- the East Village in NoHo; on behalf of our members we strongly support the designation of the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District.

Since 2006, GVSHP has advocated for the landmark designation of this area as part of our proposed South Village Historic District. We've been working very closely with City Council Member Corey Johnson for the last three years to seek designation of this final phase of that proposed historic district. With his consistent advocacy and support, the Landmarks Preservation Commission moved ahead with the designation in December. Designation of the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District was cause for

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and start.

broad celebration in the local community among residents, merchants and many property owners.

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The designation did not come a moment too soon. Developers, such as Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, have been buying properties in the area and the current zoning would allow towers of up to 300 feet in height. The district is overwhelmingly deserving of designation; it has been listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and was designated one of New York State's seven most important, endangered historic sites by the Preservation League of the State of New York.

The Sullivan-Thompson Historic District provides a wonderfully well-preserved window into New York at the turn of the last century. More than any other designated historic district in New York City, the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District is a testament to the waves of immigrants which came to New York during the last great wave of immigration that transformed our city and country.

The district contains the very first church built for an Italian-American parish and an incomparable array of tenements, reform housing and other institutions connected to the late 19th and

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME 1 USES early 20th century working-class and immigrant life 2 3 in New York. Now more than ever it's critical that 4 we honor and recognize its history. I therefore 5 strongly urge you to uphold the designation of the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District by the Landmarks 6 7 Preservation Commission and I want to offer our extreme gratitude to Council Member Corey Johnson, 8 9 for his hard work and steadfast advocacy which helped lead to this designation. Thank you. 10 11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. 12 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Do you mind 13 my asking; do you folks have copies of your testimony per chance? 14 15 SARAH BEAN APMANN: I do. 16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Just ... 17 SARAH BEAN APMANN: Just one, but... 18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Oh, that would not be a copy though, just be your testimony. 19 20 Okay. Thank you. 21 SIMEON BANKOFF: Good afternoon Council Members, Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director of the 2.2 2.3 Historic Districts Council; a pleasure to see you

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all.

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                HDC has long been a supporter of what we
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     call the South Village Historic District, and this is
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     a part of it, and we support the Sullivan-Thompson
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     Historic District. However, we would like to take
    this moment to ask the Council to consider amending
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    the designation report, actually. We would request
     that the Council... [crosstalk]
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Too much,
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    huh?
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                SIMEON BANKOFF:
                                  Sorry?
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Too much,
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                SIMEON BANKOFF: Well let me go through
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    my stuff.
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Oh Simeon, I
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     was looking for some New Year surprises over here.
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     Okay.
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                SIMEON BANKOFF:
                                  I am...
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Sorry.
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                SIMEON BANKOFF: I am actually; I'm going
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    to give you [inaudible]... [crosstalk]
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: If I had the
    testimony I could read ahead and know, but now have
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     to wait for it to arrive [sic]... [crosstalk]
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SIMEON BANKOFF: If I had gotten notice that you were going to have a hearing, I would've written up some testimony.

Okay. So we request that the Council consider removing certain elements from the designation report, specifically, the period of significance, the contributing; non-contributing language, and the statement of regulatory intent, or as we refer to it around my office, "the sorry." find that these elements of the designation report are troubling and open up some, potentially some bad, what we regard to be the potential of some bad precedence in the Landmarks Commission's functioning and how they would regulate historic districts, and if they are found to be an imperative part of the district that there are other ways that the agency can and should use to put these regulations in effect. We think that their inclusion in the designation report is improper. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Any questions
[inaudible]? [background comments] Oh. So can you
make some copies for us?

SIMEON BANKOFF: We are happy to provide a more elaborate written testimony later this week.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: That would be very helpful. Thanks; we just want to make sure that we properly get all of your feedback today. So that, seriously, would be helpful to us. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you very much.

Now we have Joseph Lopez and Joseph Rosenberg to

testify. [background comments] Yeah, go ahead.

[background comments] You can do separate times,

fine, yeah. [background comment] [pause] So

Mr. Rosenberg; you want to identify yourself and

start first?

JOSEPH ROSENBERG: Yeah, sure. Good afternoon. I'm Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council, representing the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn on legislative and policy issues before City Council and mayoral agencies. Today I appear before you in opposition to the proposed Sullivan-Thompson Historic District.

While the goals of historic preservation are laudable and supported by the Catholic Church of New York City, the designation of landmark and historic district status imposes a particularly onerous burden for religious institutions. There is

no source of public funding to address the increase costs imposed by a landmarks regulation and such designation frequently prevents a parish from effectively utilizing its property to achieve mission-based commitments and goals. Church architecture, as you all know, frequently incorporates carved stonework and stained glass that is extraordinarily costly to maintain and repair. For all intents and purposes, this financial burden falls solely on the strained resources of the parish, whose primary goal is to further its mission and serve its constituency.

The ever-expanding designation of historic districts has burdened religious institutions in many neighborhoods throughout New York City and this pending designation will not be any different. Religious institutions are already challenged by high operating costs and with scarce resources available, the inclusion of the buildings into historic districts only creates additional hardship and compromises the church's ability to focus on its prime mission. As you know, this mission includes such priorities as the operation of

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food pantries, development of affordable housing and assistance to the immigrants in our city.

The Parish of St. Anthony of Padua owns five buildings and two vacant lots in the proposed district; certainly the church at 155 Sullivan Street, is architecturally distinctive, but for the reasons I just indicated, should not be part of this designation. Similarly, the buildings at 60 MacDougal Street and 154 Sullivan might be older, but they are not distinctive structures.

The other properties owned by the Parish should also be removed from being part of this district but for other reasons. LPC staff indicated last fall that 85% of the proposed district's buildings were constructed before 1916, making them particularly significant and worthy of designation. Only 15% of the buildings in this district were built after 1916; two of them are owned by the Parish and have little architectural, cultural or historical significance; they are located at 141 Thompson Street and 190 Prince Street and were constructed in 1952 and 1955; they typify the definition of non-contributing structures and should be removed from being considered as part of this historic district.

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Therefore, due to the combination of unfunded fiscal burdens and non-contributing factors, we urge that the properties owned by the Archdiocese of New York be excluded from inclusion in this proposal. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

JOSEPH LOPEZ: Hi, I'm Joseph Lopez; I'm here representing [background comments] Thompson...

Thompson Assets... is it on? [background comment]

Okay, thank you. I'm here representing Thompson

Assets, who owns 152 Thompson Street, which is on the corner of Houston and Thompson. Similar to this gentleman here from the Archdiocese, this building has no landmark significance and it will also become a big burden on ownership, which is provably owned, on having to deal with a landmark designation.

We are currently doing renovations in various apartments and now we're puzzled with the logistics of it if we do any amendments on the plans or if we need signoffs that we're going to be subject to landmarks. We started the project last year and we weren't subject to landmarks, so now we have an additional obstacle in our way for a building, again, that doesn't have any historical significance and is

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    right on Houston Street, where Houston Street doesn't
    have historical structures as the side streets, such
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    as Prince and Spring, where you have more of the
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    historical type buildings that would fall under
     landmarks, so we would like an exclusion from
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     landmark designation for this building.
                CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.
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                JOSEPH LOPEZ:
                               Thanks.
                CHAIRPERSON KOO: Chair Greenfield.
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD:
                                             Thank you.
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    Mr. Rosenberg, two questions. So just to be clear,
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    you're opposed to the district only because of a
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     couple of properties that you would like to see out
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     of the designation, right; you're not... [crosstalk]
                JOSEPH ROSENBERG: That... That's correct.
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: you're not
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     really opposed to the [inaudible] to the district?
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                JOSEPH ROSENBERG: That's correct.
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, I just
    wanted to clarify that point. And second point is;
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    when -- you were kind enough to get us printed copies
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    of your testimony -- when did you find out about this
    hearing, 'cause I've had it on my calendar for a
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week, so I just wanted to clarify that issue?

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                JOSEPH ROSENBERG: I think I received
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    notice from my friends at City Planning around a
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    week-and-a-half ago.
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                COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Got it.
    Alright, very good. Thank you very much, sir;
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     appreciate it.
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                JOSEPH ROSENBERG: Okay.
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                CHAIRPERSON KOO: Anymore questions for ...
    No. Are there any other members of the public who
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    wish to testify? Seeing none, I will now close the
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    public hearing on this application.
                I will now ask Counsel to call the roll
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     for a vote to approve this item. Counsel, please
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     call the roll.
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                COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Koo.
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                CHAIRPERSON KOO: I vote aye.
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                COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Palma.
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                COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: I vote aye.
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                COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
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     Barron.
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                COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Permission to
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    explain my vote.
                CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah, permission...
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[crosstalk]

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME 1 USES 2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Permission to 3 explain my vote... CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah, [inaudible]. 4 I also would like 5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: to call for a copy of the testimony given by the 6 7 first panel because it was a little more extensive than what I have here, in terms of elaborating on the 8 significance of the property as having contained Little Africa and I didn't see any mention of that in 10 11 this document, but I have, so I would like to have 12 the testimony that you did vendor, and I think that 13 it's important, especially during the time of the 14 month when we're celebrating African-American History 15 Month that we give significance and importance to 16 what Little Africa meant during that time and how it 17 was a haven for not just the artists, but for other 18 cultural events. Thank you. I vote aye. 19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member 20 Kallos. 21 [background comments] 2.2 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: If I can just 2.3 have a minute or two to deliberate, if that's okay, and just confer with counsel. 24

MALE VOICE: Permission granted.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah. Permission granted, yeah. Okay.

[pause]

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Council Member Kallos; you ready for a vote?

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you Chair for your patience; thank you to Land Use counsel, as well as LPC for the quick sidebar and we were just discussing the statement of regulatory intent and so I am in favor of historic districts and the resolution before this Committee, in terms of the bounds and the community and I'd like to expand historic districts -- please bring some into my district -- and we will also be meeting outside of this hearing to go over the statements of regulatory intent to make sure that the Historic District Council and other landmarks advocates and preservation advocates are satisfied and that we're able to make sure that this doesn't come up at future hearings. That being said, I vote aye.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Application 20175206

HKM is adopted, with 4 votes in the affirmative, no

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1	SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES
2	in the negative; 0 abstentions and referred for
3	consideration of the Full Land Use Committee.
4	[background comments]
5	CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you members of
6	the public, my colleagues, counsel, and Land Use
7	staff; this meeting is adjourned.
8	[gavel]
9	[background comments]
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World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 15, 2017