



**Preservation
League of NYS**

Proposed South of Union Square Historic District One of New York's "Seven to Save"

This biennial list from the Preservation League of NYS highlights the most at-risk historic places across the state

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Manhattan, NY, 05/16/2022 — Since 1999, the Preservation League has highlighted New York's most endangered historic sites through its Seven to Save program. The League works closely with local advocates over the course of the two-year listing and beyond, raising visibility, assisting with advocacy, and providing extensive technical services. **The League is thrilled to include the proposed South of Union Square Historic District on the 2022-2023 Seven to Save list.**

"We're so grateful that the League has chosen to highlight the unique and endangered history of the area South of Union Square; the timing could not be more perfect," said **Andrew Berman, Executive Director of Village Preservation**. "This neighborhood, long a crossroads, contains a civil rights and artistic history stretching back well over a century, in buildings designed by some of the greatest architects of the 19th and 20th centuries. How many neighborhoods can claim to have been central to the struggles for African American and LGBTQ+ civil rights, as well as the Women's Suffrage movement, while also housing some of the most important artists, writers, dancers, sculptors, publishers, and recording studios of the last century and a half? Sadly that rich history is gravely endangered by a rising tide of demolitions and oversized development. We hope this designation will help spur the new Mayoral administration to finally act to protect this irreplaceable history, so central to the story of New York and our country."

The proposed South of Union Square Historic District contains a remarkable concentration of sites connected to key civil rights and social justice movements, as well as influential literary, artistic, and music movements. It offers a unique window into New York City's development in the late-19th and early-20th century, with an eclectic array of buildings, many designed by world-class American architects.

Despite its historic importance, this neighborhood is severely lacking in landmark and zoning protections. Over the decades, change to this area had typically been characterized by inventive adaptive reuse: factories and schools became apartment buildings; row houses and firehouses became shops, theatres, and restaurants; large printing houses, lofts, and recording studios became university classrooms and laboratories. In recent years, this positive redevelopment



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has become subject to aggressive development interests. Several buildings that housed artist studios, office space for civil rights leaders, and emerging nonprofits have been threatened, altered beyond recognition, or destroyed.

While the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission has cited the architectural and cultural variety of the area as a reason why the neighborhood shouldn't be landmarked, this variety and vibrancy are precisely what make the proposed South of Union Square Historic District such a vital resource to preserve. Village Preservation has designed and led the campaign for landmark designation of the South of Union Square Historic District and the League is eager to join them in this work.

“Alleviating threats and in some cases outright saving these seven sites from demolition will make for challenging approaches,” said **Preservation League Seven to Save Committee Chair Caroline Rob Zaleski**. “The Preservation League staff are up to the task, as has been shown with the Seven to Save program’s remarkable 20-year track record in forming partnerships to help save and protect historic resources in New York State. Our selection committee chose to feature a diverse range of sites: a small African American church reflecting optimism and ingenuity; a Frederick Law Olmsted park during Olmsted’s bicentennial year; three urban districts – rife with history and varied important architecture; a recently closed 400-acre State hospital complex on Seneca Lake; and lastly a wooded site in Eastern Long Island, where the extant studios of two important Abstract Expressionist artists wait to be restored for public view.”

“The individual sites included on this year’s Seven to Save list embody key preservation issues affecting places across New York State,” said **Preservation League President Jay DiLorenzo**. “From the negative environmental impact of senseless demolition to bringing little-known, but important, histories to light, the League is excited to work alongside on-the-ground advocates to save each of these seven at-risk places.”

2022-2023 Seven to Save List

- **Thomas Memorial AME Zion Church, Watertown, Jefferson County**
Threat: Deterioration; Demolition
- **Genesee Valley Park, Rochester, Monroe County**
Threat: Demolition; Development Pressure; Lack of Public Awareness; Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity
- **Proposed South of Union Square Historic District, Manhattan, New York County**
Threat: Demolition; Development Pressure; Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity
- **Penn Station Neighborhood, Manhattan, New York County**
Threat: Development pressure; Demolition
- **Downtown Oneonta Historic District, Oneonta, Otsego County**
Threat: Demolition; Deterioration; Lack of Public Awareness; Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity; Vacancy
- **Willard State Hospital, Romulus, Seneca County**
Threat: Demolition; Deterioration; Development Pressure; Lack of Public Awareness; Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity; Vacancy



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- **James Brooks / Charlotte Park Home & Studios, East Hampton, Suffolk County**
Threat: Demolition; Deterioration; Lack of Public Awareness; Vacancy

The League collaborates with property owners, elected officials, and other stakeholders to craft preservation strategies and put these plans into action. Through partnerships with groups and individuals, threats to dozens of at-risk buildings, landscapes, downtowns, and neighborhoods have been reduced, and in many cases, eliminated by the Preservation League's Seven to Save listing and subsequent actions

For more information about the Seven to Save program and this year's list, please visit preservenys.org/seven-to-save

Interviews with representatives from the Preservation League and all the Seven to Save sites are available by request.

About the Preservation League of New York State

Since its founding in 1974, the Preservation League has built a reputation for action and effectiveness. Our goal has been to preserve our historic buildings, districts, and landscapes and to build a better New York, one community at a time. The Preservation League of New York State invests in people and projects that champion the essential role of preservation in community revitalization, sustainable economic growth, and the protection of our historic buildings and landscapes. We lead advocacy, economic development, and education programs across the state.

Connect with us at preservenys.org, facebook.com/preservenys, instagram.com/preservenys, and youtube.com/c/PreservationLeague

About Village Preservation

Village Preservation is a leader in preserving the architectural heritage and cultural history of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. Founded in 1980, Village Preservation works to document, celebrate, and preserve the special architectural and cultural heritage of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. villagepreservation.org

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