



March 8, 2021

Hon. Carlina Rivera
New York City Councilmember, District 2
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Andrew Berman

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

PRESIDENT

Arthur Levin

VICE PRESIDENT

Trevor Stewart

VICE PRESIDENT

Kyung Choi Bordes

SECRETARY / TREASURER

Allan G. Sperling

TRUSTEES

Mary Ann Arisman

Tom Birchard

Dick Blodgett

Blaine Birchby

Kyung Choi Bordes

Jessica Davis

David Hottenroth

Anita Isola

Jeanne Krier

John Lamb

Justine Leguizamo

Arthur Levin

Leslie Mason

Ruth McCoy

Katherine Schoonover

Marilyn Sobel

Allan Sperling

Trevor Stewart

Judith Stonehill

Naomi Usher

Linda Yowell

Tony Zunino

232 EAST 11TH STREET

NEW YORK NY 10003

212 475-9585

VILLAGEPRESERVATION.ORG

Dear Councilmember Rivera,

I received your letter sent to constituents (attached) who urged you to support landmark designation for the area South of Union Square. This area faces tremendous pressure now, especially since the upzoning for the 14th Street Tech Hub which you led the City Council in voting to approve. While the language in your letter voicing support for these issues was encouraging, unfortunately it does not align with your actions on this issue.

In 2017 when you ran for City Council, you publicly committed in writing to only support the Mayor's proposed 14th Street Tech Hub upzoning if it included comprehensive protections for the adjacent south of Union Square neighborhood, saying at the time "without the needed zoning protections for the neighborhood, [the Tech Hub] would lead to acceleration in out of scale development for the surrounding residential neighborhood." You broke that promise, voting for the Tech Hub upzoning without securing a single zoning protection for the area. What you did secure was landmark designation of 7 unthreatened buildings, 3.5% of the area for which you had promised to secure protections in exchange for your vote for the Mayor's upzoning plan. Hundreds of your constituents and residents of these neighborhoods communicated to you that this was not an acceptable compromise, and come nowhere near to fulfilling your promise.

Since that time we have repeatedly requested that you to write to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in support of the proposed South of Union Square Historic District, which would protect much of this area from Fifth to Third Avenues, 14th to 9th Street. Alone among your colleagues in local elected office who represent the area, you have refused to do so.

The only progress which has been made on expanded landmark protections in the area south of Union Square, for which you inexplicably take credit, had nothing to do with your actions, and actually involved a building not even located within the district you represent. The city agreeing to consider 70 Fifth Avenue for individual landmark designation came after months of lobbying by Village Preservation, and Councilmember Corey Johnson sending a letter to the Landmarks Preservation Commission expressing his support for landmark designation of the small section

of the proposed historic district South of Union Square located in his Council District, which includes 70 Fifth Avenue. You have made no similar written communication to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in support of landmarking the proposed historic district South of Union Square in your district (the vast majority of that proposed district, the entire area east of Fifth Avenue), and there has been no additional progress on landmark designation in this area. Most recently developers have filed plans to demolish 64-66 University Place in the City Council district you do represent. You are yet to write the Landmarks Preservation Commission to urge designation of the proposed historic district in your Council District. For you to claim credit for movement on the city considering landmark designation of 70 Fifth Avenue strains credulity.

While much time has gone by, and many promises have been broken, we would welcome your support for landmark designation of the proposed historic district South of Union Square. I strongly urge you to finally write to the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Mayor to express your support for this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Berman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Neighborhood residents

Dear Neighbor

Thank you so much for taking the time to write this email, your advocacy is critical in preserving our New York history. Since I took office, I have been working to secure protections throughout District 2 and have supported every landmark request and calendared designation in partnership with our local preservation organizations. It has been difficult, to say the least, negotiating with an Administration that doesn't seem to have landmarks as one of its priorities.

Our community does indeed have many examples of buildings with significance in architecture, style and history, and – contrary to misleading commentary - I agree that these issues matter! In fact, almost three years ago I began the conversation to get as many landmarks as possible in District 2 and succeeded in securing more individual landmarks designations south of Union Square in my first year in office than in quite some time. In 2019, I continued to advocate for historic designations with a Council proposal for the area reflecting much of the narrative and mapping presented by Village Preservation and other community stakeholders. We have subsequently met with the Landmarks Preservation Commission multiple times to continue that discussion for this area, and other historically-relevant buildings in the East Village. As recently as last fall, we presented a series of buildings championed by preservationists for their connection to civil rights and social justice. I am happy to report that they calendared one of those, 70 Fifth Avenue, last month. We will continue to press City Hall and LPC on the rest of the targets you and I so clearly hope can become a reality.

As a woman of color and lifelong New Yorker who grew up in the East Village and Lower East Side in a low-income family, I know how important it is to genuinely honor our city's history, culture, and activism. It is great to see you and GVSHP respectfully moving towards supporting our diverse communities. Thanks again for contacting me.

Council Member Carlina Rivera

Tel: 212-677-1077

<https://twitter.com/CarlinaRivera>