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**THE COUNCIL
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August 15th, 2012

Hon. Robert Tierney
Chair, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Tierney,

I respectfully implore you and the members of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to move immediately to preserve 186 Spring Street—located in the proposed South Village Historic District—due to its vital and singular nature as the early epicenter of LGBT and AIDS activism and history in New York City.

This house—which is almost two centuries old—tells an amazing and compelling story concerning the courage, fortitude, determination and formation of the LGBT movement. Many of the early pillars of LGBT activism called 186 Spring Street home and the seeds that would bear the dream of equality were planted and sowed from this location. Those who helped found the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the Gay Activists Alliance, and Gay and Lesbian Independent Democrats all lived here—organizations which have had a profound effect upon our city and country. Without question, this building must be preserved not only due to age and architectural considerations but because it is, quite literally, the brick and mortar of the most important social movement in the last five decades.

The number of influential and pioneering individuals who lived at 186 Spring are legendary. Jim Owles was New York City's first openly-gay candidate for public office, and lobbied for New York's very first gay and lesbian anti-discrimination ordinances in the early 1970's. Bruce Voeller, who also lived here, not only led the first national gay and lesbian advocacy organization, but conducted the first research establishing that condoms prevent the spread of AIDS, and established the use of term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, rather than the inaccurate and stigmatizing "Gay Related Immune Defense Disorder (GRIDD)," to describe this syndrome. Voeller was also the subject of a landmark case before the United States Supreme Court establishing the rights of lesbians and gay men to visit and have access to their children at a time when they were still considered by many to be mentally ill and a danger to children.

Given the number of courageous individuals who lived there and its use as a “gay commune” in the early 1970s, 186 Spring Street had an extraordinary impact upon the lives of lesbians and gay men in New York City and beyond, and the legacy of their work continues to have a profound impact upon our culture today. It is the jewel in the South Village crown which played such a formative and sustaining role in the history of the LGBT community, which flourished in bars, clubs, theaters, cafes, music halls, bookstores and other gathering spaces throughout this neighborhood.

As one of four LGBT members of the New York City Council and a longstanding advocate within the community with manifest ties to this building and everything it stands for—from my days as a college intern at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, working intensely on the NYC Gay Civil Rights Bill in 1986—to my membership in the Gay and Lesbian Independent Democrats and the Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club—I feel as if this building is a part of me and I am certain millions of people feel exactly the same way.

For so many important and interconnected reasons, I urge you to protect 186 Spring Street immediately and move ahead with designation of the proposed South Village Historic District, as a whole, as soon as practicable.

In the interim, I remain...

Most respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosie Mendez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Rosie Mendez
City Councilwoman, District 2