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July 24, 2024

Sarah Carroll, Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

RE: Church of Saint Mary's, 438-440 Grand Street

Dear Chair Carroll:

Attached here is the Lower East Side Preservation Initiative's Request for Evaluation for the Church of Saint Mary's. St. Mary's is the oldest church in New York City, given the fact that the earlier St. Patrick's on Mott Street was built as a Cathedral. In addition to its important place in the cultural and architectural heritage of the Catholic Church in New York, St. Mary's has had a highly significant role in the unfolding story of immigration, a defining feature of the Lower East Side.

Since being named by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as among America's Most Endangered Places in 2008, the Lower East Side has rapidly transformed. Contemporary towers are found on almost every street, replacing historic buildings that once provided links to our collective past. St. Mary's, long an anchor on Grand Street, provides such a link. Built of fieldstone in 1833, and updated with a façade of warm brick and brownstone in 1864, it looks much the same as it did 160 years ago.

While St. Mary's served first as a place of community for Irish immigrants seeking maritime jobs along the East River, it witnessed a succession of ethnic groups moving in and out of the neighborhood over the years. Today, it is a multi-ethnic congregation, dominated by a Latino population; well-attended services are held in Spanish and in English.

The Church of St. Mary's clearly merits landmark designation for its architectural distinction and its important place within the history of New York. This effort is broadly supported by the community and included here are letters from Council Member Christopher Marte and also from parishioner Norma Ramirez, who spearheaded a petition campaign for landmarking. Research for this RFE was undertaken by Deborah Wye, LESPI 2nd Vice President. If you have questions, please contact her at dewye@gmail.com or 917-846-2953.

With thanks for your consideration,

Sincerely,



Richard Moses, President

cc: Deborah Wye, LESPI; Christopher Marte, Council Member, District 1;
Norma Ramirez, Parishioner

Lower East Side Preservation Initiative

