

March 4, 2021

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

Re: University Settlement, Educational Alliance, and former Young Men's Benevolent Association

Dear Chair Carroll:

The mission of the Lower East Side Preservation Initiative (LESPI) is the preservation of the historic Lower East Side, primarily through the designation of Historic Districts as well as Individual Landmarks. This letter presents Requests for Evaluation for three buildings:

- University Settlement, 184 Eldridge Street
- Educational Alliance, 197 East Broadway
- Former Young Men's Benevolent Association, then Arnold Toynbee House (renamed Grand Street Settlement), presently Mikvah of the Lower East Side, at 311 East Broadway

These three buildings are exemplary for their architecture and for their representation of the highly significant Settlement House Movement, originating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This was a period of widespread industrialization, rapid urbanization, and massive immigration and settlement houses offered a tangible response to communities in need, none more so than the densely packed Lower East Side. By 1910, New York housed a population that was 40% foreign-born, much of it in this crowded neighborhood.

The first Settlement House was founded in England in 1884, followed in 1886 by the first in the United States—University Settlement, which was even earlier than Hull House in Chicago (1889) or Henry Street Settlement (1903). University Settlement, still broadly active today, opened its new building at 184 Eldridge Street in 1898, and that location remains its headquarters.

The Educational Alliance opened at 197 East Broadway just a few years later, in 1891. That organization, founded in 1889, began as an engine of assimilation for the neighborhood's Jewish immigrants, but still thrives today with added satellites that meet the needs of a multi-ethnic community.

The distinctive 311 East Broadway building, at the intersection with Grand Street, is no longer a settlement house but its origins are firmly within that tradition. It was dedicated in 1905 as a Jewish



