



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## ELECTED OFFICIALS, PRESERVATIONISTS, NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS DEMAND EXPANSION OF MADISON SQUARE NORTH HISTORIC DISTRICT

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL September 23, 2017



NEW YORK – State Senator Brad Hoylman, Congress Member Carolyn Maloney, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, State Senator Liz Krueger, Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, and Council Member Dan Garodnick today sent a letter to the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) calling for an expansion of the Madison Square North Historic District. The demand follows LPC’s refusal to calendar and designate the historic Kaskel & Kaskel building, which faces imminent demolition to make way for a 40-story

luxury tower in the NoMad neighborhood on historic Fifth Avenue, just steps from the Empire State Building.

In their letter, sent to LPC Chairman Meenakshi Srinivasan, the group calls for an extension of the Madison Square North Historic District – currently located between 25th and 29th Streets and Sixth and Madison Avenues – to stretch up to 32nd Street and to designate individual landmarks for various historical buildings up to 34th Street. Absent such protections, the group argues, and in the face of a number of high-rise towers already under construction in the area, “the NoMad area risks rapid destruction and development.”

13,000 citizens have signed a petition calling on the LPC to save the Kaskel & Kaskel building.

**Senator Brad Hoylman** said: “By refusing to protect the Kaskel & Kaskel building on Fifth Avenue, one of the most iconic streets in the world, the LPC has abdicated its responsibility to preserve New York’s architectural history. It is urgent that the LPC take swift action to rectify its mistake by expanding the Madison Square North Historic District to protect the remainder of the buildings in this historic neighborhood.”

“Part of the beauty of this city is its architectural history,” said **Congresswoman Maloney**.

“We must preserve as much of that history as we can so that New York does not become a sea of high-rise buildings without any of its original charm. That is why I am joining my colleagues in government and 13,000 residents in calling on LPC to expand the Madison Square North Historic District and protect the Kaskel & Kaskel building.”

“When communities come together to preserve the key buildings that anchor their neighborhoods, that work should be given respect and full consideration by the Landmarks Preservation Commission,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “With the very soul of a 150-year-old neighborhood hanging in the balance, I urge the Commission to hear

the voices of the thousands of New Yorkers asking for its help protecting these buildings."

**Senator Liz Krueger** said: "Development is exploding in our city, and the NoMad neighborhood is right in the epicenter. The fate of the historic Kaskel & Kaskel building shows that a piecemeal approach to preservation is doomed. I urge LPC to take action to preserve the character of this neighborhood by including it in the Madison Square North Historic District before it is too late."

**Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried** said, "The Madison Square North Historic District should be expanded to protect the many historically significant buildings with unique architecture located in the area, which complements the buildings located in the existing district. Experience shows us that some of the most successful commercial and residential areas in New York City are in historic districts - SoHo, the Ladies' Mile, Madison Avenue, and Park Avenue are districts whose residents and businesses have enjoyed an improvement in the quality of life and business environment after designation."

"I am very disappointed that the Landmarks Preservation chose not to designate the Kaskel & Kaskel building as a landmark," said **Council Member Dan Garodnick**. "The lack of action here makes it all the more necessary to expand the Madison Square North Historic District."

"The original historic district designation recognized only a portion of this important midtown neighborhood. The time is long past for the Landmarks Preservation Commission to correct this inadequacy and actually protect the historic heart of Manhattan." – **Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director, Historic Districts Council**

**Mario G. Messina, President of the 29th Street Neighborhood Association** said: "We have been asking the LPC to protect this truly unique district, his history, his fabric which makes it an authentic corner of the real New York. We are calling on the Land Marks Preservation

Commission to do something forced to literally fend off the wrecking ball building-by-building; we are calling on the Land Marks Preservation Commission to do something once and for all to fend off this crisis.”

On July 25, Senators Hoylman and Liz Krueger sent a letter to the LPC calling for designation of Kaskel & Kaskel – located at 316 Fifth Avenue – following reports that a number of historic buildings were facing demolition in order to construct a luxury tower just outside the historic district. Despite their appeal – also made by the Historic Districts Council, the 29th Street Neighborhood Association, Community Board 5, Borough President Gale Brewer and Council Member Dan Garodnick – the LPC refused.

Designated in 2001, the Madison Square North Historic District represents a cross section of New York City history from the 1870s into the 1930s. Located just three blocks from the historic district and designed within its specified time frame, the 116-year old Beaux-Arts Kaskel & Kaskel was designed by architect Charles Berg and includes a number of original features such as a marble and limestone façade, copper-clad mansard roof, and original limestone cartouches. Other historic buildings facing demolition include the Holland House, the Demarest Building, and Tin Pan Alley, the center of New York’s music industry at the turn of the 20th century.

A copy of the group’s letter is included below:

September 20, 2017

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Landmarks Preservation Commission

One Centre Street, 9th Floor

New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

We are writing to urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to expand the Madison Square North Historic District – presently between 25th and 29th Streets and Sixth and Madison Avenues – to stretch up to 32nd Street and to designate individual landmarks for various historical buildings up to 34th Street. This expansion would maintain the visual corridor stretching from the Flatiron Building up Fifth Avenue to the Empire State Building and ensure the historic NoMad neighborhood survives well into our city's future.

We were deeply disappointed by the LPC's rejection of requests to landmark the historic Kaskel & Kaskel building at 316 Fifth Avenue and save it from its imminent demolition. In this refusal, the LPC fell short of its mission to preserve buildings of architectural and aesthetic merit. With plans filed for a 40-story luxury tower to be built at the site of the Kaskel & Kaskel building, as well as a number of high-rise towers already under construction, the LPC must act to preserve the special character of this neighborhood.

The proposed expansion of the Madison Square North Historic District includes a significant portion of the neighborhood, filled with Beaux-Arts and neo-Renaissance buildings built at the turn of the century, as well as pre-Civil War era Italianate row houses. It would protect countless architectural and cultural gems, including the Holland House, the Demarest Building, and Tin Pan Alley, the center of New York's music industry at the turn of the 20th century.

Without protections, the NoMad area risks rapid destruction and development. The real estate community's claims that an extension of the historic district would unfairly stifle development are without merit, particularly given the ample opportunity for development to the east of NoMad in the recently rezoned East Midtown and to the west of the area in development-friendly Hudson Yards. In fact, NoMad, a mixed-use district of new and old development, serves as a unique respite from the large swath of development sweeping across midtown Manhattan. The last thing our city needs is another district filled to its capacity with new luxury housing and hotel construction, with no remnants of its historic past. That is exactly what is at risk if the LPC does not act to protect NoMad.

The LPC's claim that 45% of the buildings in the proposed expansion area lack style or have been altered extensively dismisses the overall historic quality and distinct old New York atmosphere captured by the district as a whole. Many of the ground floor alterations that purportedly make buildings like the Kaskel & Kaskel ineligible for landmarking were a direct result of LPC inaction. Had the LPC made earlier efforts to protect this district or individual buildings, many non-contextual alterations would not exist today, and historical architecture would remain more fully intact. However, these modifications leave us with a choice: a wholesale rejection and destruction of any altered architecture or an opportunity to protect the history and splendor of what remains for preservation into the future. We wholeheartedly recommend the latter.

With the planned demolition of the Kaskel & Kaskel and inevitable development throughout the NoMad area, we urge the LPC to swiftly take action to expand the Madison Square North Historic District to protect and preserve the historic NoMad neighborhood.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Maloney, Congress Member

Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Brad Hoylman, State Senator

Liz Krueger, State Senator

Richard Gottfried, Assembly Member

Dan Garodnick, Council Member