

Community Board No. 2

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Anatole Ashraf Chairperson Debra Markell Kleinert District Manager

April 19, 2024

Sarah Carroll Chair Landmark Preservation Commission 1 Centre Street, 9th Floor New York, New York 10007

RE: Request for an Evaluation for Landmark Designation of the Bliss Theatre Located at 44-17 Greenpoint Avenue, Sunnyside, New York

Dear Commissioner Carroll:

Queens Community Board 2 is writing this letter to express our strong support for the Request for Evaluation that has been submitted for individual landmark designation of the Bliss Theater building located at 44-17 Greenpoint Avenue in Sunnyside, Queens.

The Bliss Theater is a rare surviving example of an Egyptian Revival style Art Deco movie palace in New York City. Opened in 1930, its highly ornate polychrome terracotta facade features striking architectural ornamentation with Egyptian motifs like lotus flowers, columns, decorative panels, and a distinctive marquee – remarkably intact after nearly a century. The building's two-story symmetrical entrance composition clearly conveys its original use as a prominent neighborhood movie theater.

As members of Queens Community Board 2, we are aware that there is strong support from local residents as well as a variety of local cultural and civic groups to preserve this building and re-use it as a multi-faceted arts and cultural center. It would be anchored by the Thalia Theater, an important cultural institution established in 1977 as the first and only bilingual Spanish theater in Queens and currently located a few blocks away.

The Bliss Theater's central location in the commercial heart of Sunnyside and its strong visual presence on Greenpoint Avenue reinforce the importance of its preservation. While the

building has undergone some alterations after being sold to the Jehovah's Witnesses congregation in 1965, these changes were sensitive in preserving the architecturally significant facade. The Bliss Theater remains one of the few remaining historic anchors in Sunnyside with deep cultural significance and connections to the community's past and present residents.

Landmark designation would recognize the Bliss Theater as a unique work of theater architecture and ensure the preservation of this rare Egyptian Revival style example in our neighborhood. Sunnyside currently has no individually landmarked buildings, despite its rich architectural heritage. Saving the Bliss Theater facade would help maintain the identity and character of the Greenpoint Avenue business corridor.

Community Board 2 believes this historic theater more than merits individual landmark status from the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Its architectural rarity, high degree of integrity, and importance to our local history and urban fabric make a compelling case for designation. We urge you to give this Request for Evaluation your utmost consideration.

Thank you for your attention to this matter of cultural and historic preservation in our community. Please let us know if any additional information is needed in support of this landmark request.

Sincerely.

Debra Markell Kleinert
District Manager, CB 2

Anatole Ashraf Chairperson, CB 2

Christine Hunter Chair, Land Use

& Housing Committee

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Chair, Arts & Cultural

Affairs Committee

Cc: Honorable Grace Meng, US Congress
Honorable Nydia M. Velazquez, US Congress
Honorable Michael Gianaris, NY State Senate
Honorable Kristen Gonzalez, NY State Senate
Honorable Jessica Ramos, NY State Senate
Honorable Juan Ardila, NYS Assembly
Honorable Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, NYS Assembly
Honorable Zohran Mamdani, NYS Assembly
Honorable Steven Raga, NYS Assembly
Honorable Robert Holden, NYC Council Member
Honorable Julie Won, NYC Council Member
Honorable Donovan Richards, Queens Borough President

Prameet Kumar, Vice Chair, Land Use & Housing Committee

Request for Landmark Designation of Bliss Theater 44-17 Greenpoint Avenue