



Ms. Gwen Howard, Chair
City of Buffalo Preservation Board
Buffalo City Hall, Room 901
Buffalo, NY 14201

June 24, 2020

RE: Agenda Item #11669 - Expand the Michigan Sycamore Historic District

Dear Ms. Howard:

I am writing to request that the Preservation Board recommend to the Common Council the landmark nomination to expand the Michigan Sycamore Historic District to include 63, 67, & 77 Sycamore and 578 & 582 Michigan.

As detailed in the full nomination, wedged into this southeast corner of Michigan and Sycamore is the early history of the City writ large: buildings ranging from pre-civil war to the 1920s; buildings built and occupied by German immigrants, including a stone cutter, a tailor, and a blacksmith; and one building built as a home and business for Buffalo's Market Clerk (a Common Council position at the time) by Louise Bethune's famed Bethune, Bethune, & Fuchs firm that would then go on to be occupied by "the most important Greek in Western New York" and a founder of the Buffalo Association of the Blind. Each of these buildings also operated as boarding houses at some point in their history, and two even had brief stints as houses of ill-repute. The history of these buildings, the history of this corridor tells the story of Buffalo as it grew from a sleepy canal town to a major industrial power-house, as well as the impact that racism and redlining would go on to have in our community.

Given this significance, the structures included in this proposed expansion are eligible for local landmarking as provided in Section 337 of the Buffalo City Charter 37-14, meeting the same Criteria for Designation as the Michigan Sycamore Historic District, namely, Criteria 1, 3, and 5.

PBN has submitted this nomination as part of our continued work to support our community partners by advocating for the preservation of the historic built environment of the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, a designated NYS Heritage Area since 2007. The purpose of NYS Heritage Area program is to "develop, preserve, and promote the state's



cultural and natural resources as an expression of our state's heritage" all through the focus of the four heritage goals: Preservation of significant resources, Education that interprets lessons from the past, Recreation and leisure activities, and Economic Revitalization for sustainable communities. Establishing and expanding the Michigan Sycamore Historic District is not only in accordance with the spirit of our local Preservation Ordinance but carries out the vision set forth by NYS.

Recommending this landmark application is a strong statement that we as a community see these buildings, see this corridor and the history and culture it represents, as an important part of our historic built environment. Despite the incredible significance and state-level designation of this corridor, it has been disproportionately affected by out of town speculators and racist disinvestment. The destructive results of those forces have only benefited those outside our community. Recommending this landmark application ends that status quo bias. Recommending this landmark application prioritizes the value of this community and provides the protection to ensure that the members of this community, not speculators, control the future of this very special place in our City.

Included please find letters of support from Assembly Majority Leader Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, and former Common Council President George K. Arthur. Also included is a list of the 50 people who signed our online petition in support of the nomination (as of June 24).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christiana Limniatis".

Christiana Limniatis