

# THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY

February 19, 2019

## STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF THE 826 BROADWAY, MANHATTAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK

Good morning Chair Carroll and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking for the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is pleased to return to support designation of 826 Broadway.

As we said in December, this distinguished building is one of a group of seven along Broadway that well represents the history and architecture of Manhattan just south of Union Square. #826 clearly merits designation for its architecture. It features intact Renaissance Revival facades of limestone and brick with rich terra cotta details. The architect, William Birkmire, was known for his writings on early skeleton-frame construction, exemplified in this 1902 structure.

At the earlier hearing, and in the press, the owner of 826 Broadway has made many unsubstantiated claims about the ill effects that she anticipates with designation. We would like to respond to some of them, found on The Strand Bookstore's website.

*In the last near 70 years, the number of bookstores in NYC has decreased by 79.5%*  
**This is surely a loss for the City, but has little connection with landmark designation.**

*We are in a threatening retail and book environment, and are fighting to compete with Amazon.*  
**Bookstores and many retail outlets in New York have been under siege by changes in consumer habits and rising rents. Not by landmark designation.**

*This designation would greatly limit our opportunities to survive as a tourist destination, host of author discussions, put books in the hands of readers...*

**Designation saved SoHo and the Ladies Mile Historic District. Some of the most-visited attractions in New York are landmarks.**

*The Strand needs flexibility to do future upgrades and change with the needs of the community... change the outside lighting, signage, and awning; add a coffee shop; change the configuration of the store; repairs from a fire or flood.*  
**The Strand, like hundreds of other businesses in designated buildings before it, will be able to change lighting, signage, and awnings. Adding a coffee shop with a door on the side of the building will require permits from multiple City agencies. The same paperwork can be submitted to LPC. The Landmarks Commission does not regulate changes to the interior, such as reconfiguring the store. The agency has been quick to respond to disasters such as fires, floods, and hurricanes.**

*For every repair and every upgrade, The Strand would have to go through the slow bureaucracy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission which adds to the expenses to keep Strand alive.*

**As we said in the past, we would offer to help the owner work with the Commission, if any issues arise.**

*Wouldn't it be ironic if by landmarking The Strand, ... you put it in peril?*  
**Yes, it would, but there is absolutely no evidence that will happen.**

We are mindful that designation does not preserve buildings in amber. As it has for over 100 years, 826 Broadway will evolve as needed, under the guidance of the Landmarks Commission. We believe that designation will help preserve not only buildings, but the dynamic character and vibrant quality of life in this neighborhood, and we would not want to see it diminished.

The Strand is a landmark in the hearts and minds of New Yorkers, tourists, and book-lovers everywhere. But its home is as unprotected as Rizzoli on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street was before that building was demolished. We would all feel the loss if it suffered the same fate.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.