

Member, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN

December 7, 2018

Historic Preservation Commission
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103
Attn: Tim Frye, Historic Preservation Officer

RE: Request to Include North Beach Landmark District in 2019 Work Plan

Dear Mr. Frye,

I am writing to formally request the Historic Preservation Commission's support for prioritizing the nomination of North Beach as a Landmark District in its 2019 work plan.

I thank you and the members of the Preservation staff for reviewing the revised and updated North Beach Historic Context Statement submitted to the Department on February 15, 2018. Researched and prepared by architectural historian Michael Corbett, and funded through the Northeast San Francisco Conservancy, it provides the standards for evaluating and protecting the architectural, historic, and cultural resources of North Beach, both individually and as a part of a landmark district.

North Beach is a neighborhood whose historic significance goes well beyond its architecture and building typology. From the early influx of Italian immigrants, who quickly rebuilt the neighborhood after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, to its cultural identity as the epicenter of the Beat movement and San Francisco's literary renaissance, as well as its association with early gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) history in San Francisco, North Beach has been shaped by many San Franciscans of distinction and historical significance. The neighborhood's story is not just in its unique buildings, but also in its alleyways and staircases, entertainment venues, and Prohibition era basements of forgotten speakeasies. Mapped as one of the original three public squares in 1847, Washington Square (Landmark #226) has served as the neighborhood's center for almost 170 years. In fact, of the three urban parks shown in the 1847 survey, only Washington Square remains intact, and many of its trees have as much historic significance as the surrounding buildings.

The designation of North Beach as a Landmark District is long overdue. Recently the neighborhood has experienced several fires that have highlighted the need to move forward more expeditiously with a plan to add a North Beach local district to Article 10 of the Planning Code. As the city continues to add new neighborhoods in the southeast, and as existing neighborhoods change, it is important that historic neighborhoods like North Beach have a plan for evolving appropriately, as well. The research provided to the Department by Mr. Corbett is a solid foundation to build upon, but the work over the next 12-18 months will require Department support, resources and expertise.

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Acknowledging that the Historic Preservation Commission has a full work plan to consider, please accept my formal request for your support in prioritizing the nomination of North Beach as a Landmark District as part of your 2019 work plan. My office has been working closely with the various neighborhood organizations to solicit input on a potential district and we are looking forward to working with the Department and Commission staff to engage an even broader audience. This will be one of my top priorities for 2019, so please let me know how my office can support this exciting effort.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Peskin', written in a cursive style.

Aaron Peskin