

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall  
Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244  
San Francisco 94102-4689  
Tel. No. 554-5184  
Fax No. 554-5163  
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

## MEMORANDUM

### LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

TO: Supervisor Aaron Peskin, Chair, Land Use and Transportation Committee

FROM: Erica Major, Assistant Clerk, Land Use and Transportation Committee

DATE: October 19, 2020

SUBJECT: **COMMITTEE REPORT, BOARD MEETING**  
Tuesday, October 20, 2020

The following file should be presented as a **COMMITTEE REPORT** at the Board meeting, Tuesday, October 20, 2020. This item was acted upon at the Committee Meeting on Monday, October 19, 2020, at 1:30 p.m., by the votes indicated.

**Item No. 35**                      **File No. 201138**

Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for 649-651 Duncan Street, the longtime home of pioneering lesbian activists Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin.

#### RECOMMENDED AS A COMMITTEE REPORT

Vote: Supervisor Aaron Peskin - Aye  
Supervisor Ahsha Safai - Aye  
Supervisor Dean Preston - Aye

c: Board of Supervisors  
Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board  
Alisa Somera, Legislative Deputy  
Anne Pearson, Deputy City Attorney  
Kristen Jensen, Deputy City Attorney

File No. 201138 Committee Item No. 4  
Board Item No. 35

**COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**  
AGENDA PACKET CONTENTS LIST

Committee: Land Use and Transportation Committee Date October 19, 2020

Board of Supervisors Meeting Date October 20, 2020

**Cmte Board**

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Completed by: Erica Major Date October 15, 2020  
Completed by: Erica Major Date October 19, 2020

1 [Initiating Landmark Designation - Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin House]

2

3 **Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for**  
4 **649-651 Duncan Street, the longtime home of pioneering lesbian activists Phyllis Lyon**  
5 **and Del Martin.**

6

7 WHEREAS, Under Planning Code, Section 1004.1, the Board of Supervisors (Board)  
8 may by Resolution initiate landmark designation; and

9 WHEREAS, Dorothy “Del” Martin was born in San Francisco in 1921, studied  
10 journalism at UC Berkeley, transferred to San Francisco State College (now San Francisco  
11 State University) where she was managing editor of the student newspaper the Golden Gater  
12 until she was forced to drop out of school after the birth of her daughter, and moved to Seattle  
13 in 1949 to work as an editor; and

14 WHEREAS, Phyllis Lyon was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1924, moved with her family  
15 to the San Francisco Bay Area, graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in journalism, and  
16 moved to Seattle where she and Martin met while working in the same building; and

17 WHEREAS, In 1953, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin returned to San Francisco and lived  
18 together in the Castro through 1955; and

19 WHEREAS, In 1955, Lyon and Martin purchased a modest one-bedroom house at 651  
20 Duncan Street, noting that their only requirement when searching for a home was a “house  
21 with a view”; and

22 WHEREAS, On September 21, 1955, four female couples, including Martin and Lyon,  
23 gathered in San Francisco to found the nation’s first lesbian rights organization, the Daughters  
24 of Bilitis (DOB); and

25

1           WHEREAS, DOB was initially conceived as a social group where lesbians could meet  
2 without risk, because lesbians could be arrested for dancing in bars in the 1950s, as well as a  
3 forum for educating lesbians about homosexuality and promoting social acceptance; and

4           WHEREAS, In addition to major efforts like publishing a nationally-circulated newsletter  
5 (The Ladder) and hosting national conventions, the DOB in San Francisco hosted many social  
6 activities, including private parties at Lyon’s and Martin’s house on Duncan Street, where  
7 members socialized in the home’s living room and on the grass in the backyard, and women  
8 danced together in the dining room; and

9           WHEREAS, Private residences were the only places in San Francisco in the 1950s  
10 where lesbians could socialize freely together; and

11           WHEREAS, The main façade of the house was punctuated by a large picture window  
12 overlooking the city, which prompted some women to fear that neighbors would see them  
13 dancing together in the house and to suggest that the window be obscured by a curtain; and

14           WHEREAS, By the late 1960s, DOB was the only homophile organization in the  
15 country with local chapters and a strong national governing group; and

16           WHEREAS, In 1964, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, with sponsorship from the Glide  
17 Urban Center headquartered at Glide Memorial Methodist Church, helped found the Council  
18 on Religion and the Homosexual, the nation’s first homophile organization with religious  
19 support; and

20           WHEREAS, In 1964, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin were instrumental in the founding of  
21 Citizens Alert, a citywide police watchdog program organized by leaders at the Glide Urban  
22 Center to expose the many cases of police brutality and unequal enforcement of the law; and

23           WHEREAS, In 1972, Lyon and Martin coauthored *Lesbian/Woman*, a highly influential  
24 volume describing lesbian lives in a confident, comprehensive, and knowledgeable way; and  
25

1           WHEREAS, In 1975, Mayor George Moscone appointed Phyllis Lyon to the Human  
2 Rights Commission and Del Martin to the Commission on the Status of Women; and

3           WHEREAS, In 1976, Del Martin published *Battered Wives*, one of the earliest books on  
4 domestic violence published in the United States; and

5           WHEREAS, In 1995, Lyon and Martin were appointed delegates to the White House  
6 Conference on Aging; and

7           WHEREAS, In 2004, Lyon and Martin were the first same-sex couple to legally wed in  
8 San Francisco when Mayor Gavin Newsom ordered the City Clerk to grant marriage licenses  
9 to same-sex couples; and

10          WHEREAS, In 2008, Lyon and Martin were again the first same-sex couple to legally  
11 wed in San Francisco when the State Supreme Court established marriage equality; and

12          WHEREAS, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon resided at 651 Duncan Street continuously  
13 from 1955 until their deaths in 2008 and 2020, respectively; now, therefore, be it

14          RESOLVED, That the Board hereby initiates landmark designation of the longtime  
15 home of pioneering lesbian activists Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, located at 649-651 Duncan  
16 Street (Assessor’s Block/Lots 6604/036 and 6604/037); and, be it

17          FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department  
18 prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission  
19 for its consideration of the special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of  
20 the property and existing house and structures; and, be it

21          FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Historic Preservation  
22 Commission consider whether the property or existing structures warrant landmark  
23 designation, and submit its recommendation to the Board according to Article 10 of the  
24 Planning Code.

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244  
San Francisco 94102-4689  
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Fax No. 554-5163  
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Rich Hillis, Director, Planning Department  
Jonas Ionin, Commission Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Erica Major, Assistant Clerk, Land Use and Transportation Committee

DATE: October 2, 2020

SUBJECT: LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

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The Board of Supervisors' Land Use and Transportation Committee has received the following proposed legislation, introduced by Supervisor Mandelman on September 29, 2020:

**File No. 201138**

**Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for 649-651 Duncan Street, the longtime home of pioneering lesbian activists Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin.**

If you have comments or reports to be included with the file, please forward them to me at the Board of Supervisors, City Hall, Room 244, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102 or by email at: [erica.major@sfgov.org](mailto:erica.major@sfgov.org).

cc: Corey Teague, Planning Department  
Dan Sider, Planning Department  
Laura Lynch, Planning Department  
Scott Sanchez, Planning Department  
Lisa Gibson, Planning Department  
Devyani Jain, Planning Department  
Adam Varat, Planning Department  
AnMarie Rodgers, Planning Department  
Aaron Starr, Planning Department  
Andrea Ruiz-Esqvide, Deputy City Attorney  
Joy Navarrete, Planning Department

**From:** [Shayne Watson](#)  
**To:** [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#); [Preston, Dean \(BOS\)](#); [Safai, Ahsha \(BOS\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#); [Grete Miller](#); [MandelmanStaff, \[BOS\]](#)  
**Subject:** Initiating Landmark Designation: Lyon-Martin House (649-651 Duncan Street)  
**Date:** Monday, October 19, 2020 1:07:29 PM  
**Attachments:** [Friends of Lyon-Martin House.pdf](#)

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Dear Supervisors Peskin, Preston, and Safai,

On behalf of the Friends of the Lyon-Martin House, please see the attached letter in support of initiating Landmark designation for the longtime home of Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin (10/19/20 agenda item 201138).

Sincerely,

Shayne Watson

# Friends of the Lyon-Martin House

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Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
Chair, Land Use and Transportation Committee  
San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, Ca. 94102-4689

October 19, 2020

Dear Supervisor Peskin,

The Friends of the Lyon-Martin House (FLMH) formed in September 2020 as a community group seeking to preserve the longtime home of pioneering lesbian activists Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon at 649-651 Duncan Street in Noe Valley. We are writing to urge the Board of Supervisors to designate the Lyon-Martin House as a San Francisco Landmark.

Purchased by the couple in 1955, the Lyon-Martin House is embraced by community members as a site of international significance. For over 50 years, the Lyon-Martin House served as headquarters for groundbreaking social- and civil-rights movements, including some of the earliest meetings of the Daughters of Bilitis, the nation's first lesbian-rights group, cofounded by Lyon and Martin in 1955. Lyon and Martin did not lead single-issue lives; they were committed to ensuring that others could live their lives in safety, have access to opportunities, and experience and enjoy full inclusion and equal rights. Within this house, Lyon and Martin wrote, strategized, organized, and fought against the barriers of oppression. And in doing so, forced the world to change and turn toward the side of justice.

We hope you will join us in recognizing the extraordinary significance of this site and honor the legacy of Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin with Landmark designation of their longtime home at 649-651 Duncan Street.

Sincerely,

The Friends of the Lyon-Martin House

## SIGNATORIES

NAME	LOCATION	EMAIL ADDRESS (optional)
Shayne Watson	Mill Valley, CA	shayneewatson@gmail.com
Deborah Svoboda	San Francisco, CA	deborah.svo@gmail.com
Charles Kaminski	San Diego, CA	charleskaminski23@gmail.com
Jennifer Hand	San Francisco, CA	hand.jennifer.l@gmail.com
Amanda Hamilton	San Francisco, CA	amandahamilton@outlook.com
Moses Corrette	San Francisco, CA	moses@ifpte21.org
Nadia Winstead	Vashon, WA	veganadiaverna@gmail.com
Amanda Wilkins	Mill Valley, CA	amandavwilkins@gmail.com



Grete Miller	East Orange, NJ	gretemillermedia@gmail.com
Kathryn Wollan	Ossining, NY	ktwollan@gmail.com
Katherine Petrin	San Francisco, CA	petrinkatherine@gmail.com
Lisa Oman	St. Paul, MN	<a href="mailto:lisaannoman@outlook.com">lisaannoman@outlook.com</a>
Alan Martinez	San Francisco, CA	awmartinez@me.com
Liên Shutt	San Francisco, CA	lienshutt@yahoo.com
JEB (Joan E. Biren)	Silver Spring, MD	jebmedia@hotmail.com
Lindsay Mulcahy	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:lymulcahy@gmail.com">lymulcahy@gmail.com</a>
Gerard Koskovich	San Francisco, CA	gkoskovich@gmail.com
Desiree Aranda	Phoenix, AZ	desiree.aranda17@gmail.com
Jim Van Buskirk	San Francisco, CA	<a href="mailto:jimvanbuskirk415@gmail.com">jimvanbuskirk415@gmail.com</a>

Alana Schilling	Wilmington NC	aks19501@gmail.com
Heather Martin	Philadelphia, PA	ham223@nyu.edu
Andrew Dolkart	New York, NY	asd3@columbia.edu
Brandy Lusvardi	Los Angeles, CA	brandylusvardi@gmail.com
Amanda Davis	New York, NY	amanda@nycgbtsites.org
Barbara Frances	Santa Cruz, CA	veganbarb@yahoo.com
Mary Finch	Santa Cruz, CA	marycfinch@yahoo.com
Adrian Scott Fine	Los Angeles, CA	afine@laconservancy.org
Laura Dominguez	Los Angeles, CA	lad2122@gmail.com
Martin Meeker	Forestville, CA	martinmeeker@gmail.com
Gyla Becks	San Jose, CA	gbecks10@gmail.com
Gregory Traverso	Amador City, CA	gtraverso424@gmail.com
Don Romesburg	San Francisco, CA	misterromesburg@gmail.com
Mark Meinke	Fairfax, Virginia	mwmeinke@gmail.com
Lucie Faulknor	San Francisco, CA	lucie.faulknor@gmail.com
Els Richardson	San Francisco, CA	elsdarlene@gmail.com
Finn Finneran	San Francisco, CA	

David Hyman	San Francisco, CA	david.hyman@sflcd.org
Jack Giesecking	Lexington, KY	jgieseking@gmail.com

Susannah Smith	San Francisco, CA	suzsmithqb@gmail.com
Damon Scott	Oxford, OH	scott2@miamiOH.edu
Charles Edwin Chase	San Anselmo, CA	c.chase@argsf.com
Amber Perry	Granite Falls, NC	aperry0816@gmail.com
Sherry Watson	Tomball, TX	Sherbooks@sbcglobal.net
Sa	San Francisco, CA	terry@glbthistory.org
Nancy Yerian	Covington, KY	nancy.a.yerian@gmail.com
Jeffrey A. "Free" Harris	Hampton, VA	freeharris@hotmail.com
Judith Tax	NY, NY	<a href="mailto:jetlcsw@gmail.com">jetlcsw@gmail.com</a>
Elizabeth D. Lemke	Pacifica, CA	<a href="mailto:beth.lemke@gmail.com">beth.lemke@gmail.com</a>
Nancy Wiener	NY, NY	<a href="mailto:nhwiener@gmail.com">nhwiener@gmail.com</a>
Paula Lichtenberg	San Francisco CA	<a href="mailto:pflkab@gmail.com">pflkab@gmail.com</a>
Kate Brandt	San Francisco, CA	katebrandt51@gmail.com
Cindy Heitzman	Napa, CA	cindy@californiapreservation.org
Evan Roberts	San Francisco, CA	evandavidroberts@gmail.com
John Anderies	Philadelphia, PA	janderies@waygay.org
Ardis Sperber	Boynton Beach, FL	ardissperber@yahoo.com
Madeline Jarvis	Philadelphia, PA	<a href="mailto:madelinemjarvis@gmail.com">madelinemjarvis@gmail.com</a>
Timothy Frye	New York, NY	timothymichaelfrye@gmail.com
Hannah Blake	Philadelphia, PA	hannah.r.blake@gmail.com
Larry Lincoln	New York, NY	larja2@msn.com
Elizabeth Hollinger	Norristown, PA	bycbet@aol.com
Doug Malchenson	Harrisburg, PA	dmalchenso@gmail.com
Sarah Schmidt	Schenectady, NY	<a href="mailto:finnsome@yahoo.com">finnsome@yahoo.com</a>
Charlotte Fiorito	San Francisco, CA	charcam@gmail.com
Jo Harrison	Adelaide, Australia	harrisonja@bigpond.com

Richard Adkins	W. Toluca Lake, CA	<a href="mailto:RikAlAd@aol.com">RikAlAd@aol.com</a>
Ryan Davis	New York, NY	
David Barbour	New York, NY	<a href="mailto:david.barbour@plasa.org">david.barbour@plasa.org</a>
Celeste Hong	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:celestehong@earthlink.net">celestehong@earthlink.net</a>
Jessica Lopez	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:jlgirl210@aol.com">jlgirl210@aol.com</a>
Robert Gurval	Los Angeles CA	<a href="mailto:gurval@humnet.ucla.edu">gurval@humnet.ucla.edu</a>
Peter Mavromates	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:CaitInsdad@aol.com">CaitInsdad@aol.com</a>
Mary Sullivan	Long Beach, CA	<a href="mailto:msullivan05@verizon.net">msullivan05@verizon.net</a>
Paul P. Soucek	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:politicek@gmail.com">politicek@gmail.com</a>
Laura Boccaletti	West Hollywood, CA	<a href="mailto:lboccaletti@hotmail.com">lboccaletti@hotmail.com</a>
May Hong Haduong	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:mayhaduong@yahoo.com">mayhaduong@yahoo.com</a>
Tim Doherty	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:L-C-D-L-M@sbdglobal.net">L-C-D-L-M@sbdglobal.net</a>
Cecil Castellucci	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:misscecil@mac.com">misscecil@mac.com</a>
Kevin Carter	West Hollywood, CA	<a href="mailto:kebncarter@gmail.com">kebncarter@gmail.com</a>
Neil Cosgrove	Saint Paul, MN	<a href="mailto:neiljoecos@hotmail.com">neiljoecos@hotmail.com</a>
Rosemary Hilb	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:Rsmly@aol.com">Rsmly@aol.com</a>
Todd Warner	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:todd@tailwaggerspets.com">todd@tailwaggerspets.com</a>
Kay Tornborg	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:kxiaojie@att.net">kxiaojie@att.net</a>
Lindsay Sandler	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:bettedaviseyes84@yahoo.com">bettedaviseyes84@yahoo.com</a>
Pamela Elyea	Glendale, CA	<a href="mailto:PElyea@gmail.com">PElyea@gmail.com</a>
Patricia Eliot Tobias	San Pedro, CA	<a href="mailto:patriciaeliottobias@gmail.com">patriciaeliottobias@gmail.com</a>
David Kobosa	Northridge, CA	<a href="mailto:dkobosa@yahoo.com">dkobosa@yahoo.com</a>
Caroline Yeh	Santa Monica, CA	<a href="mailto:hilto@aol.com">hilto@aol.com</a>
Kevin Segall	Woodland Hills, CA	<a href="mailto:kevinsegall@gmail.com">kevinsegall@gmail.com</a>
Alan Simon	Sherman Oaks, CA	<a href="mailto:electura@mindspring.com">electura@mindspring.com</a>
Bryan Cooper	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:bryman@lycos.com">bryman@lycos.com</a>
Beth Marlis	Glendale, CA	<a href="mailto:gtrdiva@aol.com">gtrdiva@aol.com</a>
Kathleen Clark	Glendale, CA	<a href="mailto:katclarkfoto@aol.com">katclarkfoto@aol.com</a>
Elissa Braitman	Manhattan Beach, CA	<a href="mailto:zclcs38eb@yahoo.com">zclcs38eb@yahoo.com</a>
Jim Elyea	Glendale, CA	<a href="mailto:voxbook@aol.com">voxbook@aol.com</a>

Tricia Welsch	Brunswick, ME	twelsch@bowdoin.edu
Zena Grey	Los Angeles, CA	info@zenagrey.com
Ray Schiel	Los Angeles, CA	<a href="mailto:rayschiel@gmail.com">rayschiel@gmail.com</a>
Angela Brooks	Los Angeles, Ca	angelaraebrooks@gmail.com
Gwendolyn Stegall	New York, NY	gwendolyn.stegall@gmail.com
Juliana Sorelli	Los Angeles, CA	julianasorelli@gmail.com
Tony Villanueva	Hollywood	vtonythetiger@gmail.com
Marc Melocchi	Studio City, CA	marcmelocchi@gmail.com
Steve Tepperman	Levittown, Pa.	stepperman125@hotmail.com
Eric Furan	Los Angeles, CA	ericdf1@earthlink.net
Daniel Bergeson	Mendocino, CA	<a href="mailto:sedan.dan@gmail.com">sedan.dan@gmail.com</a>
A.M.Estebes	Miami, Fl	
Jody Stock	Austin, TX	jstock4@yahoo.com
Julieta England	North Hollywood, CA	<a href="mailto:jengland71@hotmail.com">jengland71@hotmail.com</a>
Diane Pancel	Victoria, Canada	<a href="mailto:Diane.pancel@gmail.com">Diane.pancel@gmail.com</a>
Harry Arends	Hollywood, CA	hdaprod@yahoo.com
Jerry Lee Abram	San Francisco, CA	jerryleeabram@gmail.com
Jaci Rohr	Los Angeles, CA	jacirohr@earthlink.net
Katie Conry	San Francisco, CA	kconry@tenderloinmuseum.org
Laurie Jacobson Provost	Santa Rosa, CA	<a href="mailto:lauriejacobson@juno.com">lauriejacobson@juno.com</a>
Caitlin Abadir-Mullally	Philadelphia, PA	caitlinabadirmullally@gmail.com
El Woo-Powell	Philadelphia, PA	eleanorypowell@gmail.com
Marcia M. Gallo	New York, NY	marciamgallo@icloud.com
Donna Graves	Berkeley, CA	donnagraves01@gmail.com
Elena Selk	Los Angeles, CA	elenamselk@gmail.com
Stella Sythe	Santa Rosa CA	stellarosekai@yahoo.com
Todd Swindell	Sebastopol, CA	jasontoddswindell@gmail.com
Jason K. Wright	San Francisco, CA	jasonkennethwright@gmail.com
Ellen Sturtz	Los Osos, CA	eosturtz@yahoo.com
Judith Sara	Huntington Ma	<a href="mailto:Judithandcarol@yahoo.com">Judithandcarol@yahoo.com</a>



**From:** [Brian Turner](#)  
**To:** [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Christina Morris](#)  
**Subject:** Lyon-Martin House Landmark Designation - National Trust Letter of Support  
**Date:** Friday, October 16, 2020 3:09:23 PM  
**Attachments:** [NTHP Letter re Lyon-Martin House.pdf](#)

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Supervisor Peskin,

Please find attached a letter of support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for proposed legislation introduced by Supervisor Mandelman that would initiate landmark designation for 649-651 Duncan Street, the "Lyon-Martin House."

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Brian

**Brian Turner** | SENIOR FIELD OFFICER AND ATTORNEY  
P 415.692.8083

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
PRESERVATION SERVICES & OUTREACH DEPARTMENT  
2600 Virginia Avenue, NW Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20037

[www.SavingPlaces.org](http://www.SavingPlaces.org)





**National Trust for  
Historic Preservation**  
*Save the past. Enrich the future.*

October 16, 2020

Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
Chair, Land Use and Transportation Committee  
San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

**Re: Landmark Designation - Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin House  
(File No. 201138)**

Dear Supervisor Peskin,

On behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation we write to offer our full support for the designation of the home of Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin at 649-651 Duncan Street as an Article 10 Landmark. The local effort to designate this important cultural site came to our attention following publicization of the property's recent sale and through the grassroots advocacy of the Friends of Lyon-Martin House. Given the national and international significance of the LGBTQ+ history embodied by the Lyon-Martin House, the property deserves recognition and protection by the city of San Francisco as a landmark.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to saving a diverse array of historic places across the United States. Founded in 1949, the National Trust provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources to save America's historic sites, tell the full American story, build stronger communities, and invest in preservation's future. With nearly one million visitors to its 28 historic sites each year, more than 1,500 main streets as members of its Main Street America program, and partnerships with more than 120 local and statewide organizations, the National Trust has deep knowledge and expertise in managing and preserving historic resources for various public interest uses, including museums, historic artist homes and studios, and collections.

For decades, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin played an integral role in the movement to protect the civil rights of the LGBTQ+ community. Their home on Duncan Street was the location of countless meetings of the Daughters of Bilitis, the nation's first lesbian-rights organization founded in San Francisco in 1955.

In 2016, the National Park Service released “LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History,” which was intended as a guide to increase the number of historic sites that reflect LGBTQ+ history that are included in historic registers, and ultimately preserved. The massive Theme Study was the first of its kind and included a chapter on civil rights history, as well as a chapter focused entirely on San Francisco’s LGBTQ+ history. The significance of the Daughters of Bilitis, as well as the work of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, was included in both of these chapters as examples of history worthy of preservation. Lyon and Martin were identified as “gay rights pioneers,” and the couple continued their advocacy throughout their lives on issues like gay marriage.

Lyon and Martin are particularly notable as the first couple to be married in San Francisco in 2004 when the city issued same-sex couple marriage licenses for a short time. They were then again the first couple to be married in 2008 in San Francisco after California’s Supreme Court legalized marriage. During all of this activism, Lyon and Martin lived together in their home at 649-651 Duncan Street.

Further, across the country, historic places that reflect the history of the LGBTQ+ community are woefully underrepresented on registries of historic properties. The Theme Study noted in 2016 that of the approximately 95,000 places listed on the National Register of Historic Place, only ten places representing LGBTQ+ history were listed in the National Register or designated as a National Historic Landmark. Clearly, there is a need for the identification, recognition, and preservation of many more LGBTQ+ historic sites to ensure that we are telling a full and truthful American story.

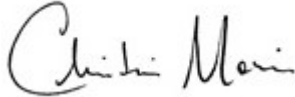
The efforts and achievements of women like Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin have too often been lost, forgotten, or deliberately obscured, and the National Trust firmly believes that we cannot tell our national story without telling the story of women in America history. Our new national campaign, Where Women Made History, was launched specifically to tackle these structural inequities by reshaping how women’s history is interpreted and honored, and raising up places across the country, like the Lyon-Martin House, where women of all backgrounds, ages, beliefs, and identities have made a meaningful difference in their communities and in the world.

The local landmarking of the Lyon-Martin House would be a positive step in honoring the life and activism of pioneering LGBTQ+ advocates and ensuring the long-term preservation of a site that was so integral to their lives and their work. The National Trust fully supports the formal recognition and designation of the Lyon-Martin house as an Article 10 Landmark. We hope that the city will move forward expeditiously to approve the designation, and the wet would welcome further discussion with you about how best to preserve the legacy and tell the powerful civil rights story of the Lyon-Martin House as a source of inspiration for others.



Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of the residents of San Francisco and for your interest in protecting the places that tell the history of the LGBTQ+ community.

Sincerely,



Christina Morris  
Senior Field Director, Los Angeles



Brian Turner  
Senior Field Officer and Attorney, San Francisco

Cc (via Email):

Supervisor Rafael Mandelman, Sponsor  
Erica Major, Assistant Clerk, Land Use and Transportation Committee  
Supervisor Ahsha Safai, Member, Land Use and Transportation Committee  
Supervisor Dean Preston, Member, Land Use and Transportation Committee  
Aaron Jon Hyland, President, San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission  
Shayne Watson, Friends of the Lyon-Martin House  
Mike Buhler, President & CEO, San Francisco Heritage  
Terry Beswick, Executive Director, GLBT Historical Society  
Sharee Williamson, Senior Associate General Counsel, National Trust for Historic Preservation

**From:** [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#)  
**To:** [BOS-Supervisors](#)  
**Cc:** [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Lyon Martin House (File No. 201138)  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 20, 2020 10:26:18 AM

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**From:** Susie Smith <suzsmithqb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 20, 2020 10:17 AM  
**To:** Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>  
**Subject:** Lyon Martin House

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Board of Supervisors-

I am a Queer woman and resident of Noe Valley, writing in strong support of designating the 649-651 Duncan Street former home of Dell Martin and Phylis Lyon a San Francisco Landmark. These two women are giants in the history of San Francisco, LGBTQIA+ rights, healthcare, and nationally for marriage rights for all. These activities were centered here, in their home, for 50+ years, starting in times when even the thought of being an out Lesbian was unthinkable. It is so important to not only honor their legacy, but to preserve the history of the fight for LGBTQIA rights so that future generations can have places to learn their history. I know of no more fitting place to make sure we honor the women of these civil rights movements, particularly now- when once again we see a movement to overturn the marriage rights they fought for, trans lives under attack, etc.

Let's continue their legacy of making San Francisco the forefront of LGBTQIA+ rights by acknowledging the places that have been the center of grass-roots change and civil rights.

Thank you-  
Susannah Smith  
467 29th St  
San Francisco, CA 94131

# Introduction Form

By a Member of the Board of Supervisors or Mayor

Time stamp  
or meeting date

I hereby submit the following item for introduction (select only one):

- 1. For reference to Committee. (An Ordinance, Resolution, Motion or Charter Amendment).
- 2. Request for next printed agenda Without Reference to Committee.
- 3. Request for hearing on a subject matter at Committee.
- 4. Request for letter beginning : "Supervisor  inquiries"
- 5. City Attorney Request.
- 6. Call File No.  from Committee.
- 7. Budget Analyst request (attached written motion).
- 8. Substitute Legislation File No.
- 9. Reactivate File No.
- 10. Topic submitted for Mayoral Appearance before the BOS on

Please check the appropriate boxes. The proposed legislation should be forwarded to the following:

- Small Business Commission
- Youth Commission
- Ethics Commission
- Planning Commission
- Building Inspection Commission

**Note: For the Imperative Agenda (a resolution not on the printed agenda), use the Imperative Form.**

Sponsor(s):

Subject:

The text is listed:

Signature of Sponsoring Supervisor:

For Clerk's Use Only