



NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project

Making an invisible history visible

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November 22, 2024

Re: Letter of Support for NRHP Nomination for Lavender Hill Commune, Newfield, New York

To the New York State Review Board:

The New York City LGBT Historic Sites Project strongly supports the nomination of the Lavender Hill Commune in Newfield, New York, to the National Register of Historic Places. New York State leads the nation in the number of LGBT sites on the National Register. Its continued support of LGBT people and the community's history through these nominations is vital as the teaching of LGBT history is under increasing threat nationwide.

As you know, the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, launched in 2015 by preservation professionals, is an award-winning cultural heritage initiative and educational resource. The Project has documented nearly 500 sites from the 17th century to 2000 that are important to LGBT history and illustrate the community's influence on New York City and American culture. This has led to a total of ten National Register of Historic Places nominations and amended nominations of LGBT individual sites and the amended nomination of one historic district.

The nomination by our colleagues of the Lavender Hill Commune in Central New York is especially important because it officially recognizes and raises awareness of the LGBT community's cultural heritage in rural America. As a rare surviving example of a rural commune built by and for the LGBT community, Lavender Hill was an early experiment in expanding the definition of family to include chosen families. We also note the strong New York City roots of the commune; Lavender Hill's eleven core members were originally part of a Staten Island collective, and many were born and/or raised in the city. In addition to the property being nominated under Criterion A, we also support its nomination under Criterion B for its association with Larry Mitchell, who was an openly gay teacher at Richmond College on Staten Island at the time of the collective's formation in the early 1970s.

We ask that you approve this nomination.

Sincerely,

Amanda Davis, Project Manager

Andrew S. Dolkart, Ken Lustbader, and Jay Shockley, Co-Directors