



Making an invisible history visible

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December 2, 2021

Re: Letter of Support for Landmarking Gilbert Baker's Rainbow Flag, San Francisco

To the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission:

The New York City LGBT Historic Sites Project strongly advocates for the landmark designation of Gilbert Baker's Rainbow flagpole installation at Harvey Milk Plaza in San Francisco. The Project is an award-winning cultural heritage initiative that has documented over 375 LGBT sites in New York City, including ones connected to Gilbert Baker, that illustrate the community's influence on American culture. The Project's work has also led to the designation of seven NYC Landmarks and the listing of ten sites on the National Register of Historic Places.

Gilbert Baker's Rainbow Flag, originally created in San Francisco in June 1978, has become a global symbol of the LGBT community. It was created "for all genders, all races and all ages...a flag for the Rainbow of Humanity." The flag itself, in its now many iterations around the world, symbolizes unity, support, protest, and pride. And – for a community that has historically had to remain invisible – its display inside and outside institutions, businesses, public spaces, and residences provides one of the most visible and instantly recognizable signs of LGBT expression and inclusion. Baker is an internationally recognized queer artist and activist who also has personal ties to New York City, where he lived from 1994 until his death in 2017. On June 25, 1994, in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, Baker set a world record when 10,000 volunteers unfurled a mile-long Rainbow Flag in front of the United Nations, making headlines around the globe. Cut-up portions of the flag were then brought to an ACT UP demonstration at St. Patrick's Cathedral to protest the Catholic Church's stance on homosexuality.

We support the Gilbert Baker Foundation's advocacy efforts to have the Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza designated a San Francisco Landmark. This would preserve and officially recognize a symbolic work of queer art that is an icon of San Francisco and a beloved destination for visitors from around the world.

Sincerely,

Andrew S. Dolkart, Ken Lustbader, and Jay Shockley, Co-Directors
Amanda Davis, Project Manager

Copy: Charles Beal, president, the Gilbert Baker Foundation