

Hon. Eric Adams, Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Sue Donoghue, Commissioner  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation  
The Arsenal, Central Park, 830 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10065

Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President  
One Centre Street, 19th floor South  
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Councilmember  
224 West 30th Street, Suite 1206  
New York, NY 10001

Hon. Valerie De La Rosa, Chair  
Community Board 2 Manhattan  
3 Washington Square Village, #1A  
New York, NY 10012

Dear Mayor Adams, Commissioner Donoghue, Borough President Levine, Councilmember Bottcher, and Chair De La Rosa:

We the undersigned are members of the coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown ("SPRCD" or "sparked") and we stand united in opposing the demolition of The Tony Dapolito Recreation Center located at 1 Clarkson Street and in calling for its repair.

This coalition was born out of the growing concern over the erosion of public spaces in our community, particularly those that serve as vital cultural landmarks like The Tony Dapolito Center. For more than a century, the facility has been a cornerstone of our neighborhood, providing affordable and accessible recreational programs and services to people of all ages. The Center also boasts an outdoor pool surrounded by a Keith Haring mural, a rare jewel of public art and point of pride downtown.

In 2019, the NYC Park Department under Mayor Eric Adams shut down the outdoor pool for repairs. In 2021, the Park Department shut down the entire Center also allegedly for repairs. But on July 10, 2024 the Eric Adams administration announced that they planned to demolish the entire Center. The administration further represented that, despite public promises to the contrary, no meaningful repairs had been made to either the Center or its outdoor pool.

This threat of demolition highlights a disturbing trend in urban planning—where community spaces are systematically neglected then eradicated, leaving behind those who rely on these public amenities the most. For many, the center provides an affordable way to stay

active, socialize, and find respite from the pressures of daily life. It features a basketball court, a running track and indoor and outdoor pools, for instance, that are more than just facilities for swimming, playing ball or exercising - they are spaces where neighbors connect, families spend quality time together, and children learn valuable skills. Our coalition aims to protect the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center not just as a building, but as a symbol of inclusivity and public investment in the well-being of all residents.

In addition, we stand in defense of the Keith Haring mural adorning the outdoor pool part of the Center, a powerful piece of public art that embodies the spirit of social activism and accessibility. For Haring, art was never intended to be confined to galleries or elite spaces; he believed that art should belong to everyone, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. His vibrant work on the wall bordering the outdoor pool is a testament to this ethos.

This fight is also about honoring LGBTQ+ history and the ongoing struggle for equal rights. Keith Haring was a vocal advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, especially during the height of the AIDS epidemic, and his work continues to resonate with those who fight for justice and visibility. The mural at the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center serves as a poignant reminder of the LGBTQ+ community's resilience during one of the darkest periods in history. Preserving this artwork and retaining it for public display is a vital act of remembering and recognizing the contributions of those who fought tirelessly for visibility and equality in the face of discrimination and crisis.

As a coalition, we are committed to defending both the legacy of public spaces and the artistic expressions that tell our shared story. We are dedicated to ensuring that the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center and the Keith Haring mural remain intact, protected, and publicly accessible for future generations to enjoy, learn from, and be inspired by.

Sincerely,

Downtown Independent Democrats  
SoHo Alliance  
Village Reform Democratic Club  
Bleecker Area Merchants and Residents Association  
South Village Neighbors  
West Village Residents Association  
Central Village Block Association  
Downtown Nasty Women Social Group  
Team Min  
The Wednesday Group  
Friends of Finn Square