



Greenwich Village

SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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2018
NEWSLETTER

Saved from the Wrecking Ball!

*GVSHP leads winning campaign
to landmark de Kooning lofts*

In late 2017, GVSHP literally saved the two striking 1866 cast-iron and masonry loft buildings at 827-831 Broadway (12th/13th Streets) from the wrecking ball. We got the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to landmark the structures, which were slated for demolition and replacement with a grossly out-of-scale 300 ft. tall office tower. GVSHP led a year and a half long campaign, which began when our daily monitoring of Department of Buildings applications of every site in our neighborhood uncovered an application to demolish these historic buildings.

The Society immediately asked the LPC to landmark the buildings, based upon their 19th century origins and grand architecture. But they refused.

We did not give up, however. We dug deeper in our research and unearthed documentation showing that these two buildings played a uniquely important role in the history of 20th century art. Both Willem and Elaine de Kooning lived and had studios

there in the 1950s and 60s. A string of influential painters including Jules Olitsky, Paul Jenkins, Larry Poons, and Herbert Ferber lived and worked there. MoMA curator William Rubin, considered a powerful force in shaping 20th century art, maintained a loft there designed by a young Richard Meier, which served as a key gathering space for the New York School of artists. And the buildings were designed by Griffith Thomas, one of 19th century New York's greatest architects, were built by one of New York's oldest and most prominent business families, the Lorillards, and housed some of the 19th century's most

innovative industries, including Wilson's Sewing Machines.

We also gathered support from art world luminaries, preservation organizations, elected officials such as Borough President Gale Brewer, and generated literally hundreds of letters from average New Yorkers in support of designation. GVSHP and neighbor Eric Rayman even placed an op-ed in the New York Times urging the LPC to reconsider their decision and save the buildings.

This fall the LPC finally relented and scheduled a hearing on landmark designation.

GVSHP was joined by dozens of supporters, including City Councilmember Rosie Mendez, to urge swift designation. Just two weeks later, the LPC voted unanimously to landmark the buildings, citing both their architecture and cultural history.

As we go to press, the developer/owner of the building has abandoned his demolition and 300 ft. tall tower plans due to landmarking. But he is seeking approval to add a large, jarring glass addition on top, which GVSHP opposes. When a hearing on that proposal has been scheduled, we will notify and mobilize the public. More at gvshp.org/dekooning.



Mayor's 'Tech Hub' Plan Threatens Village, East Village

Development without protections would spell disaster for neighborhood

Mayor de Blasio is set to release his plan to build a huge 'Tech Hub' on city-owned land currently occupied by a PC Richards store on 14th Street east of 4th Avenue in early 2018. A half year public review and approval process will follow, the outcome of which will have enormous ramifications for the future of the neighborhood between 3rd and 5th Avenues, Union Square and Astor Place.

This area is already suffering from a growing flood of oversized and often commercial (hotel or office building) development in

tech industry, among others, in development in the area, has led to this bad and worsening situation.

West of 4th Avenue, we are seeing luxury condo towers and tech-related office developments of 300 feet tall or higher. The tower on the former Bowlmor site at University Place and 12th Street is one example. A huge planned office building at 799 Broadway/80 East 11th Street (the St. Denis) is another. A 300 ft. tall office tower had been planned for 827-831 Broadway (see p.1), until we got it landmarked.

East of 4th Avenue, where we got some zoning protections for the area in 2010, the zoning nevertheless still encourages large commercial construction, such as the 313-room 'Moxy' Hotel with multiple bars on East 11th Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues, which is

replacing five walk-up apartment buildings with scores of permanent housing units (many of them affordable). Not only are such large commercial uses out of character for the neighborhood, but they allow developers to get around the affordable housing incentives the 2010 rezoning put in place for the neighborhood. More hotels and office buildings of this size and scale are likely in the near future under current conditions.

In response, GVSHP has proposed new zoning for the University Place and Broadway corridors (west of 4th Avenue) that would impose reasonable height limits for new development and add incentives for affordable

housing—a supposed priority of the de Blasio administration. East of 4th Avenue, including the 3rd Avenue corridor, we have proposed adjusting the 2010 zoning so that large commercial buildings are no longer allowable (small ones and mixed use buildings would remain possible). This would maintain the predominantly residential character of the neighborhood, and eliminate the loophole allowing developers to avoid the existing affordable housing incentives.

Mayor de Blasio has adamantly opposed these measures. It has become clear that the only way we will get him to provide these protections is to force his hand, as we did in prior cases. The Mayor needs the City Council's approval for his 14th Street Tech Hub, which without these zoning protections would exacerbate and accelerate the overdevelopment problem in this area, which touches the site.

Outgoing City Councilmember Rosie Mendez, who faced term limits, supported GVSH and pledged to only support the Tech Hub if these long overdue zoning protections for the adjacent blocks of the Village and East Village were included as part of the deal. So Mayor de Blasio held the project until her term ended, hoping for a better outcome. But incoming Councilmember Carlina Rivera has very publicly pledged, via GVSH's City Council Candidate Questionnaire and several candidate forums we co-sponsored, to also condition her support for the Tech Hub upon these neighborhood zoning protections. We must work hard to support Councilmember Rivera in this pledge, and to insist that the Mayor approve GVSH's proposals for neighborhood protections.

Public support will be needed at many hearings and meetings on this issue in 2018—see gvshp.org/savemyneighborhood for more info.



GVSH led a rally calling for zoning protections to accompany any Tech Hub plan in November.

this mostly residential, moderately-scaled area. A combination of a near total lack of zoning and landmark protections (rare for our neighborhood) and an increasing interest by the

West Village Faces Continuing Development Pressure

Empty Storefronts and Oversized Building Plans Confront Area

The West Village has some of the strongest landmark and zoning protections of any place in New York City—much of which GVSHP has helped secure over the last fifteen years. But the neighborhood still faces some big preservation challenges:



Proposed building at 540 Hudson Street.

New Building Proposal, 540 Hudson Street at Charles Street. A developer has applied for permission to build a 7-story undulating brick apartment building on this corner, currently largely occupied by a parking lot and disused gas station. While new development is allowable on sites in the Greenwich Village Historic District like this, it must conform to the character of the neighborhood. Therefore GVSHP urged the Landmarks Preservation Commission to demand serious changes to the design and scale of the proposed new building at a public hearing in 2017. No decision has yet been rendered.

The Future of West Village Houses? This 42-building, 420-unit development on six blocks in the Far West Village faces some serious questions about its future. With a design Jane Jacobs and community activists helped shape as an alternative to Robert Moses' urban renewal plan, this complex was built as affordable housing in the mid-1970s when few wanted to live in this part of the Village. In 2006 the owner of the complex left the affordable housing program, but a 12-year tax break has allowed the complex to remain affordable for many original residents since then. But that break ends in early 2018.



West Village Houses as seen from the air.

To address this issue of affordability and others like accessibility and resiliency, the Board of the Houses has said they are looking at options such as partnering with developers on plans that would include demolition and new development. While we understand that these issues are critical, we also feel strongly that the historic and design significance of the complex, as the only buildings which Jane Jacobs had a hand in designing, are important as well. And we want to ensure that reasonable options that would preserve that significance are fully explored. Additionally, GVSHP and the community fought very hard for zoning protections for this area in 2005, and would be very troubled by any effort to undo or weaken those protections. We are continuing to closely monitor the situation.

Gansevoort Street Development GVSHP strongly opposed approvals by the Landmarks Preservation Commission allowing a developer to demolish and build large additions atop several buildings on Gansevoort Street, as well as approvals for a large new building at 70-74 Gansevoort Street. While our advocacy helped lead to a reduction in the size of the proposed

new buildings and additions, the approvals were still completely inappropriate. Now as part of the renovation work on several of the 'preserved' buildings in the row, the developer

has demolished all but the facades. GVSHP has brought this to the attention of the Landmarks Preservation Commission and demanded an explanation. Did they approve this demolition without notifying the public? The Commission is yet to respond.

Our friends at Save Gansevoort have challenged the LPC's approvals for the Gansevoort project in court. GVSHP attended the hearing and is eagerly awaiting the final outcome.

Fighting Empty Storefronts GVSHP participated in the #shopbleecker effort to support local businesses there and reverse the trend of empty storefronts on this street. Through our ongoing Business of the Month program, advocacy for legislation that would help small businesses negotiate lease renewals, zoning measures that would restrict or limit the placement and concentration of chain stores, and programs like our recent talk with Jeremiah Moss, GVSHP is exploring various ways to support small businesses and improve the retail environment in our neighborhoods. See more at gvshp.org/smallbiz.

14 Fifth Ave. Giant Tower Proposal Sends Shockwaves

Plan May Not Be Real, But Opposition It Faces Would Be

In late 2017 images were leaked of a plan for a 370ft. tall tower designed by Robert A.M. Stern for 14 Fifth Avenue (8th/9th Streets) in the Greenwich Village Historic District. The proposed building would be the tallest ever constructed in Greenwich Village, and require the demolition of an existing building on the site which was originally built as two townhouses by Henry Brevoort in 1848.

The idea understandably sent shockwaves through the neighborhood and among preservationists, for whom this kind of development at this location is unthinkable. GVSHP issued a strong public statement condemning and pledging to fight the plan, which was picked up by most media who covered the story.

However, it remains to be seen how serious or real this idea is. No plans have yet been filed with the Department of Buildings, and no application

has yet been submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. If this were to become a real proposal, public hearings would be required at the Community Board and the Landmarks Preservation Commission before the Commission would render a decision as to whether or not the demolition and new construction plan could be approved. In such a case, GVSHP would notify and mobilize the public with the full weight of all resources at our disposal.

But we are also not just waiting to see if this becomes real. GVSHP is in close touch with residents, community leaders, and building boards in the surrounding area, as well as elected officials and other preservation groups whose support we would want and need. We are gathering as much information as possible about the existing building on the site as well as comparable cases which have come before the Commission over the years, to be as prepared as possible should this proposal become real.

As we always emphasize, demolition and new construction can and has

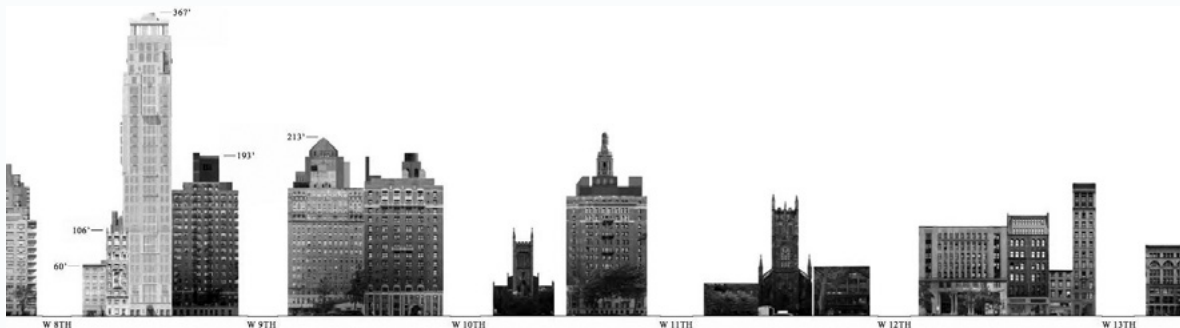
taken place in historic districts like the Greenwich Village Historic District, with the approval of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. But such approval should only be granted if the existing building is of no historic significance, and the proposed replacement is appropriate and in character for its surroundings. In this case, neither is true.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission should roundly reject such a proposal if it were ever submitted. However, in recent years especially, we have seen a drift on the part of the LPC towards greater and greater acceptance of demolition of arguably significant buildings, and of out of scale and out of character new construction in historic districts. This trend has unfortunately accelerated under Mayor de Blasio, so we take nothing for granted.

Every day, GVSHP monitors every one of 6,500 building lots in our neighborhood for new demolition or construction permit applications, and every one of the 3,500 landmarked properties in our neighborhood (like this one) for applications to make substantive changes. So we will know as soon as any such plans are filed, and we will be sure to inform the public immediately. See gvshp.org/14-5av for more info.



Image of possible proposed new building at 14 Fifth Avenue



Rendering of proposed 14 Fifth Avenue building in context, showing how out of scale it would be.



14 Fifth Avenue today.

Historic Images, Hansberry Plaque, Federal Houses

GVSHP Shares Never-Before-Seen Photos, Historic Medallion, and Catalogue of 200 Year Old Houses

Historic Image Archive: GVSHP has added nine new historic image collections totaling two hundred photos to our online archive over the last six months, with many more to come. Some new collections are narrowly focused, showing the dismantling of the High Line in the West Village in the early 1960s from the perspective of a local family; Fire Patrol #2 at 84 West 3rd Street before it was decommissioned and converted to a residence; the interior of a Gilded Age Mansion at 26 West 10th Street on “Renwick Row,” ca. 1900; or Willem de Kooning working in his studio at 827 Broadway, as captured by Village Voice photographer Fred W. McDarrah.

Others are more expansive, such as our “Carole Teller’s Changing New York” collection of photos by a local artist who documented dramatic change in New York from the early 1960s to the 1990s; the Meredith Jacobson Marciano collection, a location scout’s favorite storefronts, bars, diners, wall signs, and street scenes spanning the 1970s to 9-11; the Center for Migration Studies Collection, showing Italian immigrant life in the South Village in the early 20th century; the Jack Dowling Collection, capturing the decay and poignant desolation along the Greenwich Village waterfront following the collapse of the West Side Highway in 1973; and the Ruth Cushman collection, taken by the scion of one of New York’s great real estate families in the early 20th century, showing horse-drawn snow plows in Washington Square, hard-working shippers along the Hudson waterfront, and the buildings demolished to make way for the World Trade Center overlooking Manhattan’s oldest church



Some recent additions to the GVSHP Historic Image Archive.

burial ground.

Most of these collections result from the generosity of local residents sharing their own or their family’s personal photographic memories, which are often incredible time pieces documenting important history. See them all at archive.gvshp.org, and contact info@gvshp.org if you are interested in donating.

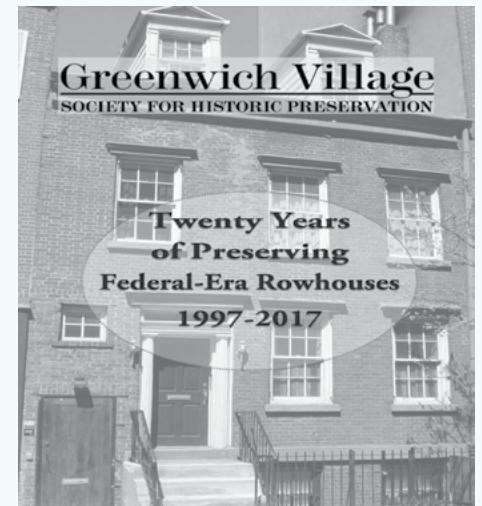
Lorraine Hansberry Historic Medallion:

GVSHP and the Historic Landmark Preservation Center placed a marker on 112 Waverly Place, home of Lorraine Hansberry, author of ‘A Raisin in the Sun’ and the first African-American woman to have a play produced on Broadway. Now the literary and civil rights icon’s many contributions and her connection to the Village are highlighted for all to see as they pass, just west of Washington Square. Scores of fans and supporters turned out for the unveiling ceremony, at which scholars, academics, journalists, and documentarians spoke about Hansberry’s life and significance.

The marker is GVSHP’s 11th; this summer we also unveiled one at 27 Cooper Square, a nexus of the Black Arts movement and other political, social, and cultural ferment in the 1960s. For information on all, see gvshp.org/plaque.

Twenty Years of Federal Houses: GVSHP celebrated the 20th anniversary of our grant from the Preserve NY program to document

federal-era (1790-1835) houses in Lower Manhattan with a program providing a broad overview about efforts to preserve this special and beloved class of historic structures. We also released a report, “Twenty Years of Preserving Federal Era Rowhouses,” which showed each of the one hundred thirty six such houses GVSHP has helped get landmarked and/or placed on the National Register of Historic Places since we received the grant two decades ago. The structures range from grand to modest, immaculately preserved to unrecognizably altered. They are located in the West, East, and South Village, NoHo, Hudson Square, and the Financial District. See the full report at gvshp.org/federal20.



Fighting for Charas/ Old PS 64

GVSHP and our allies have been fighting for well over a decade to return the landmarked former PS 64/Charas-El Bohio Cultural Center at 605 E. 9th Street (Ave. A) to a true community use, and to see the historic building restored. The developer who bought the building nearly twenty years ago has consistently sought to demolish and disfigure the building, allowed it to decay, and sought to place illegal uses there. Fortunately, this broad coalition has stopped his most egregious plans. But a stalemate has persisted, as he has refused to restore the building, relinquish control, or locate legal and appropriate uses there.

Before leaving office, Councilmember Rosie Mendez secured a public commitment from Mayor de Blasio to seek to return the building to a public, community use. We intend to hold the Mayor to this commitment, and ensure that the current developer owner does not succeed in locating the illegal uses there. We look forward to working with new City Councilmember Carlina Rivera and our allies to bring an appropriate conclusion to this decades-old saga. See gvshp.org/charas.



Trump SoHo

Trump Out of SoHo

Late last year the Trump Organization announced it was cutting ties with the failing Trump SoHo, which is reportedly struggling financially, and which is not actually in SoHo. This follows years of effort by GVSHP to get the City to vigorously enforce the zoning restrictions which cover this property. GVSHP objected to any permits being issued for the construction of this eyesore, which violated zoning restrictions prohibiting residential and residential-hotel use in the area.

While the City insisted on allowing the project to move forward, as a result of our opposition, a restrictive declaration was placed on the property requiring annual monitoring of compliance with zoning regulations. But for years the City refused to enforce the declaration, until GVSHP exposed the failure to do so. Since then, the City has begun to demand records of the annual inspections, and issued fines and violations for failure to comply, thus preventing and deterring the Trump SoHo from profiting from illegal uses which violate the zoning. We are glad to see our efforts have had an impact with this recent withdrawal, and will continue to push for full and fair enforcement here. See gvshp.org/trump.

Saving Federal Houses at 206 Bowery, 22 E. B'way

Preserving Federal (1790-1835) houses is a special part of GVSHP's mission, and thus we get involved with efforts which extend beyond the bounds of our neighborhood. Two such examples are 206 Bowery (Spring/Prince St.) and 22 East Broadway (Catherine St.). These nearly 200 year old houses were first considered for landmark designation about five years ago, but the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) never rendered a final decision. Because of a law passed by the City Council in 2016 and signed by the Mayor, potential landmarks like these are automatically "decalendared" or dropped from consideration as potential landmarks, with all temporary protections from demolition and alteration stripped, if the LPC does not act within a proscribed time frame. If the LPC did not act by the first of the year, this is exactly what would happen. GVSHP has urged the LPC to protect these historic houses, and helped mobilize the public to ask the same. As we go to press, the LPC has not yet acted. See gvshp.org/federals.

*in
brief*



206 Bowery (l.) and 22 E. Broadway

From the Director

This past year we celebrated some rather significant 50th anniversaries. It was fifty years ago that The Public Theater opened in the former Astor Library on Lafayette Street with the groundbreaking musical *Hair*, giving that cultural institution a permanent home while saving a beloved historic landmark from the wrecking ball. Just up the



street that same year, Tony Rosenthal's 'Alamo' sculpture, more commonly known as 'The Cube,' was installed on Astor Place—New York's first piece of public outdoor contemporary art.

In the West Village, fifty years ago the Jefferson Market Library opened in the former Jefferson Market Courthouse, culminating a years-long battle to save that local treasure from demolition and providing a much-needed community resource. And West Village theater producer David Rothenberg founded the Fortune Society, an award-winning social service agency which reintegrates the formerly incarcerated into society.

GVSHP helped create and support public programs, oral histories, street renamings, and community gatherings to mark each of these occasions. These milestones speak to so much of what defines our neighborhood, and the mission of GVSHP: preserving historic buildings, supporting cultural institutions, engaging the public through the arts, and fostering transformative social change.

We're aiming for fifty more years of such progress, and then some. I hope you'll join us.



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Bulletin Board

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Visit GVSHP's blog *Off the Grid* for fun and fascinating glimpses into our neighborhoods' hidden history, eye-catching architecture, and colorful characters—see gvshp.org/blog.

Get with the Program! Upcoming lectures, book talks, walking tours, and panel discussions are listed at gvshp.org/programs; past program videos are at gvshp.org/pastprograms.

For the Children Our Kids Ed program serves over 1,000 kids students each year regardless of need, using the Village as a living lab to show how history can be understood from the built environment around them. Find out more at gvshp.org/kidsed.

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Save the Date—GVSHP's Spring Annual Benefit House Tour and Reception are Sunday, May 6

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Greenwich Village

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