



## Will Greenwich Village and East Village Become 'Midtown South'?

### *Tech Hub Will Transform Neighborhood, Unless Protections Are Included*

GVSHP has been leading the campaign to demand that the Mayor's proposed 23-story "Tech Hub" at 120 East 14th Street near 4th Avenue include zoning or landmark protections for the adjacent neighborhood along University Place, Broadway, 3rd and 4th Avenues.

We're seeking to ensure it doesn't accelerate the process of oversized, out-of-character development plaguing the area. We've made some critical progress, but this summer the fate of these neighborhoods will be decided, largely by one person: City Councilmember Carlina Rivera.

**Background** This section of Greenwich Village and the East Village between Union Square and Astor Place is unique among these neighborhoods in that it has neither landmark protections nor adequate zoning protections. Nearly all of the rest of these two neighborhoods has one or both. Combine that with the fact that the expanding tech industry has identified this area as the latest beachhead for "Silicon Alley"—the concentration of tech firms for years located north of 14th Street around Union Square and the Flatiron District—and we are seeing an explosion of out-of-character development here, from 300+ room

hotels to 300 ft. tall office and condo towers. More are in the pipeline, including a large office building planned for the old St. Denis Hotel site at Broadway and 11th Street.

For more than three years, GVSHP has been fighting to get zoning or landmark protections for this area to prevent the inappropriate development. Every elected official, both community boards, and the affected communities broadly support these measures proposed by GVSHP. But the Mayor, who must approve any such changes, has adamantly opposed them.

**The Tech Hub** And now the Mayor is proposing his 14th Street Tech Hub project, which would clearly accelerate this process. Several developers and real estate media outlets have cited the potential new Tech Hub as spurring much of the new development in the area.

But there's a catch: the Mayor needs the approval of the City Council for the Tech Hub, since it requires a zoning change. During the 2017 campaign for City Council, GVSHP called on all candidates for the District 2 seat to pledge to condition any City Council support for the Tech Hub upon GVSHP's proposed protections for the surrounding neighborhoods. Carlina Rivera did so both in her questionnaire and at

our candidate's forum, and GVSHP has been working closely with her to try to achieve these protections as part of any deal.

The public approval process for the Tech Hub rezoning began in February. After initially resisting doing so, GVSHP was able to persuade both Community Board #3 and Borough President Gale Brewer to condition their support for the Tech Hub upon the inclusion of neighborhood protections. But the Mayor continues to resist such measures.

The final vote on the Tech Hub will take place in the City Council, likely in August. It's incumbent upon us to let Councilmember Rivera know how critical her pledge is to protecting the character of these neighborhoods, and that if she stands firm, the Mayor will have to provide the needed protections. To encourage her to do so, send her a letter at [gvshp.org/carlina](mailto:gvshp.org/carlina), and learn more about the effort at [gvshp.org/tech](http://gvshp.org/tech).



GVSHP members turned out in force at public hearings to demand the Mayor's Tech Hub include neighborhood protections.

## Mayor, Real Estate Industry Seek OK For Supersized Buildings

*Effort Continues to Lift State Cap on Size of NYC Residential Buildings*

**GVSHP is working with a coalition of preservation organizations and elected officials to block an attempt by Mayor de Blasio and the real estate lobby to lift a decades-old State cap on the size of residential buildings in New York City.**

The current cap allows 1,500 ft. tall towers like those rising on 57th Street. But this is not enough for the Mayor and developers, who want no absolute limit whatsoever. GVSHP and our coalition stopped the effort this spring, but as we go to press, these forces are aligning again to seek to undo this modest but critical constraint.

**Two years ago, the same players attempted to lift the cap in the State Legislature during the final days of the legislative session.** An attempt was made to cram the measure through without public hearings, analysis, or notice. Fortunately, we were able to stop it then.

**This year, the forces behind lifting the cap had the measure surreptitiously inserted into the State Senate's version of the budget.** GVSHP and others waged a campaign to ensure

the measure did not make it into the State Assembly's version of the budget, generating thousands of letters to state legislators. The State Assembly did not include the measure in their budget.

**Following this defeat, GVSHP published an op-ed warning that while the battle was won, the war was not over.** The Mayor and his allies in real estate would likely try again to sneak this measure through as part of what's called



In spite of a record number of supertall buildings rising, the Mayor and real estate industry want the few state restrictions on residential building sizes in NYC lifted.

“the Big Ugly”—the rush of bills considered at the end of legislative session, without public involvement, and usually involving some of the most controversial measures sought by powerful special interests.

**Of course this is exactly what happened.** Without warning, the measure was passed by a State Senate committee, with almost all support coming from non-New York City Senators. GVSHP and our allies are again leading a public campaign to ensure the Assembly does not pass the measure.

**Lifting the cap could have a profound effect upon all of New York City, including our neighborhoods.** Some parts of the Village actually allow a density of new development near the current cap. The Mayor has made clear that if the current cap is lifted, he would like to increase the allowable size of new residential development in areas like this to well above the currently allowable level.

And once Midtown level densities are applied to residential neighborhoods throughout the city, you can be sure that there will be an effort to lift the allowable level of density in neighborhoods like Greenwich Village and the East Village, which are already among the most densely populated residential neighborhoods in New York.

**The argument by the Mayor and others in favor of lifting the cap is based upon the false premise that the only**

**way to increase the affordability of housing in New York City is to massively increase the amount of market-rate housing being built.** The Mayor has a policy, which GVSHP opposes, of only requiring or incentivizing the inclusion of affordable housing as part of a massive upzoning. This creates a completely unnecessary connection between oversized development and affordable housing, which serves neither our neighborhoods nor the cause of affordability. Read more at [gvshp.org/cap](http://gvshp.org/cap).

## Shakeup at the Landmarks Preservation Commission

### *Chair Resigns After Controversial Proposals and Decisions, Amid Calls for Reform*

The Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), Meenakshi Srinivasan, suddenly announced her resignation this past April, effective June 1. This followed a stormy tenure rife with controversial decisions and a proposed change to the LPC rules that would have cut the public out of a significant piece of the public review and approval process for changes to landmarked buildings.

**Ruling Out the Public** Earlier this year the LPC proposed changes to their rules that would have made certain kinds of applications for changes to landmarked properties no longer subject to public review. Under the current process, the public is notified of such proposed changes, can see the applications (which GVSHP posts on our website and informs the public about), and has the opportunity to provide information or comments in response, either at hearings at the local community board or at the LPC or in writing in advance.

The LPC proposed instead to make certain kinds of applications, including those for some rooftop additions or rear year additions, subject to staff level review and approval only. This would mean that the public would have no opportunity to provide comments or information on the applications, either in person or in writing, would have no opportunity to see the applications, and would not even know that such applications had even been filed or were under consideration.

GVSHP took a strong stance against 'cutting the public out of the process' in this way, and thousands of our members and supporters wrote in opposition to the plan, and scores showed up at the public hearing to object.

As we go to press, there has been no action on the plan.

**Controversial Decisions** This followed a series of controversial decisions across the city shepherded through the Commission by the Chair. In our own neighborhoods this included approval of totally inappropriate new developments at 11 Jane Street and 145 Perry Street, an oversized addition to 827-831 Broadway/47 E. 12th Street, and the legalization of the removal of the historic entryway surround from 'One If By Land' at 17 Barrow Street.

Additionally, the LPC approved an oversized and strangely-designed new building for 540 Hudson Street at Charles Street, to which GVSHP and many others objected. However, after the building was approved, GVSHP discovered that the application included inaccurate drawings which consistently made the proposed building look smaller in relation to its surroundings than it actually would be. GVSHP brought this to the attention of the LPC Chair and demanded a response. Thus far she has refused to do so, though we do not intend to drop this matter.

**Seeking Reform** A case such as 540 Hudson shows why it is critical that landmarks applications remain in the public eye, so that inaccurate or incomplete information can be corrected, and the perspectives of neighbors, preservationists, and other interested parties can be heard and considered. The overall situation points to the need for a true preservationist as Chair of the LPC, and GVSHP has spearheaded a campaign to push the Mayor to do so with his appointment. We have generated thousands of letters to that effect—send your own and learn more at [gvshp.org/lpreform](http://gvshp.org/lpreform).



Some of the many controversial approvals by the LPC under the recent chair: (top to bottom) 11 Jane Street, 145 Perry Street, and 540 Hudson Street



## Fighting To Save Our Local Small Businesses

### *Empty Storefronts, Astronomical Rents Threaten Neighborhood Character*

Empty storefronts, chains replacing independent businesses, and longtime local services disappearing are just some of the serious problems facing our neighborhoods. GVSHP is attacking the problem and seeking to support local small businesses in several ways:

**Small Business Jobs Survival Act** GVSHP is part of a coalition of neighborhood groups and small business leaders pushing for action on the SBJSA, a City Council bill that would keep landlords from refusing lease renewals to business that can pay a reasonable rate and

reintroduced in the Council with local members Carlina Rivera and Margaret Chin as co-sponsors. Our third Councilmember, Speaker Corey Johnson, has promised to hold a hearing. GVSHP and our allies held a rally in April on the City Hall steps to show support for the bill. We expect a hearing to take place soon.

### **Limiting Chain Store Encroachments**

Throughout the country, other cities have successfully set limits on where chain stores can locate in retail districts. GVSHP is working with a coalition of groups to see such measures introduced here in New York City, where it has never been done before.



are otherwise good and responsible tenants. Too often some owners refuse to even consider renewals, and then leave storefronts vacant for months or years while they seek astronomical rents for the space. The SBJSA, which in thirty years has never received a vote and only once received a hearing, has recently been

to advance a proposal for such limits in the East Village. We had a hearing at the local community board at which hundreds turned out to support the measure, but Community Board #3 is yet to vote on the proposal. We hope to see that rectified soon. We are also hopeful

that if we are able to first succeed in the East Village, where there is already strong support for such a measure from local merchants, we will be able to pursue similar measures in Greenwich Village and elsewhere.

### **Supporting Independent Businesses**

Each month GVSHP promotes a different independent business that make a special contribution to our neighborhoods through our Business of the Month program. Businesses are nominated by the public, and if chosen, appear in our blog, our newsletter, and our social media, telling their story and highlighting the special goods or services they offer. Recent businesses have included the West Village's Hudson River Flowers, The Original Sandwich Shoppe, and Eva's Kitchen, as well as the East Village's Russian & Turkish Baths and Dual Specialty Spices and South Asian Natural Food.



So far we've showcased over forty unique, independent businesses. And of course we also celebrate our local

We are working closely with the East Village Independent Merchants Association and the East Village Community Coalition

businesses with our Annual Village Awards (see Letter from the Director).

**Bleecker Street** The transformation of and vacancies on Bleecker Street has been a particular concern to GVSHP. We have worked with local merchants on the #ShopBleecker initiative, conducting walking tours to bring patrons to the street, and are working with elected officials to see if penalties or disincentives for keeping storefronts empty can be implemented.

See [gvshp.org/smallbiz](http://gvshp.org/smallbiz) for more.

## New Resources Celebrate and Share Village History

### *Historic Pics, Mapping Tools, Oral Histories & Plaques Rolled Out*

In the last few months, GVSHP has unveiled a plethora of great new resources about the rich history of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo.

#### **Historic Images**

GVSHP recently added several hundred new images to our online historic image archive. Many of them came from the painstaking process over several months of culling all historic images from nine years' worth of applications filed with the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for changes to landmarked buildings in our neighborhoods. These applications (some of which the LPC is seeking to hide from public view—see p.3) contain a rarely-seen treasure trove of historic imagery, which GVSHP has now made available to the public. Images range from the recent past to the 19th century and even older, and provide fascinating and invaluable information about the history and evolution of our communities.

Additionally, we added two hundred new images from our 'Carole Teller's Changing New York' collection, taken by a local artist from the early 1960s to the early 1990s. View all these images at [archive.gvshp.org](http://archive.gvshp.org).

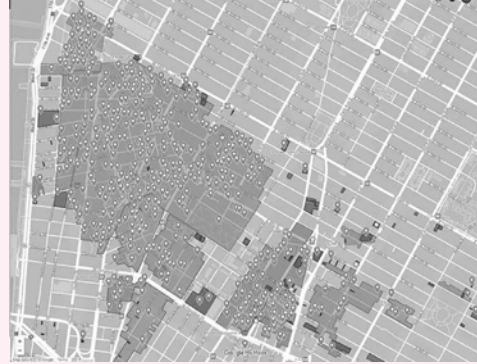


We've made hundreds of new historic images available on our website.

**Maps** We also recently created a map showing where every one of the applications for major changes to landmarked properties in our neighborhoods over the last nine years is located, along with a link to the application and information about the final decision or status of the application. View it at [gvshp.org/lpc](http://gvshp.org/lpc).

GVSHP also continues to expand our Civil Rights and Social Justice Map of our neighborhoods, with several new additions covering African-American, Women's, and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) history. The map, which has been viewed over 75,000 times, contains well over one hundred sites where significant events occurred or significant figures lived (or live) that were connected to civil rights or social justice history. Explore them all at [gvshp.org/civilrightsmap](http://gvshp.org/civilrightsmap).

**Oral Histories** As part of our ongoing effort to capture and share first-person interviews with activists, small businesspeople, artists, community leaders and preservationists who shaped or witnessed the course of history in our neighborhoods, GVSHP recently added several new oral histories to our online collection. They include: Chino Garcia, co-founder of the East Village's legendary CHARAS-El Bohio Cultural Center; artist Paula Deluccia Poons, who along with her husband artist Larry Poons has lived for over forty years in the now-landmarked loft buildings at 827-831 Broadway, which were the



Our new mapping device for all landmarks applications in our neighborhoods.

center of the New York art world in the late 20th century; and Beverly Moss Spatt, the first woman chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission

(LPC) and former member of the City Planning Commission, who oversaw some of the most controversial and consequential designations, rules changes, and approvals by the LPC. Access them all at [gvshp.org/oralhistory](http://gvshp.org/oralhistory).

**Historic Plaque** In May GVSHP was proud to place a plaque on 58 Bleeker Street in NoHo, the former site of Elizabeth Blackwell's NY Infirmary for Women and Children, the very first hospital run by, staffed by, and serving women. Blackwell was the first woman doctor in America, and a remarkable figure who transformed not only women's role in society but the way healthcare was delivered in this country. We were joined by her grand niece and many luminaries in the fields of women's health care for the unveiling and celebration. Learn more at [gvshp.org/plaque](http://gvshp.org/plaque).



Unveiling the Elizabeth Blackwell plaque.

## CHARAS Developer Sues to Stop Our Advocacy

Earlier this year, developer Gregg Singer sued GVSHP and our Executive Director, along with other advocates and city officials, to try to prevent us from continuing to advocate against his attempts to construct what appears to be a 'fake dorm' inside the landmark building, in violation of city restrictions which we fought hard to put in place. For two decades through three Mayoral administrations, Singer has continuously and unsuccessfully attempted to destroy this beloved historic structure, and to secure permits for developments which have consistently been determined not to conform with applicable rules and regulations.



The IFC's planned new renovation and addition, as seen from Sixth Avenue.

Following a public statement by Mayor de Blasio that he would like to work to see this building returned to a public use, Singer filed the lawsuit, claiming all parties were conspiring to deprive him of his constitutional rights. With the support of our members, GVSHP is vigorously fighting the suit, and has no intention of lessening our advocacy one iota on this or any other matter.

## Saving the Merchant's House

GVSHP is working closely with the Merchant's House Museum to stop approvals for a hotel which would tower over the museum next door. The museum believes the hotel development would do irreparable damage on the interior and exterior to its building, an irreplaceable historic and cultural public resource.

Unfortunately, the Landmarks Preservation Commission approved the proposed hotel several years ago. But the development also needs several zoning changes, and GVSHP and the museum are fighting those. Community Board #2 turned them down; the application must be approved by the City Planning Commission and the City Council, which will vote later this year. GVSHP will continue to work with the Museum to ensure its safety and preservation.



The proposed hotel (I.) next to the Merchant's House.

## IFC Center Expansion

In 2015, the IFC Center on Sixth Avenue proposed an expansion of their theater complex. IFC and other movie houses showcasing independent films provide an important and welcome cultural amenity in our neighborhoods, and we were glad the Center sought to grow.

However, their original plan involved a zoning variance which would have expanded the movie house onto tiny residential Cornelia Street, where such large-scale commercial uses are strictly prohibited. Neighbors were understandably concerned about the impact a five-story commercial presence would have on their street; GVSHP was concerned that if the variance was granted and IFC ever discontinued operations at this location, the extra-large commercial space, including the Cornelia Street section, would inevitably be occupied by a different, and likely less beneficial, commercial use.

Fortunately, a workable compromise was forged. The expanded complex will contain residential uses along the Cornelia Street side, while IFC will be able to develop behind it in the interior of the lot and above the current theater on Sixth Avenue. The new design must go to the LPC for approval. GVSHP is urging that the new Cornelia Street design more accurately reflect the residential nature of that street, and that the former 1930s streamlined elements on the theater's Sixth Avenue exterior be restored. We hope to see the Center expand and continue to thrive in the future.

*in  
brief*



## From the Director



Summer is a wonderful time for GVSHP. Our Annual Meeting and Awards allows us to celebrate a year's worth of accomplishments and an incredible assortment of small businesses, cultural institutions, creative individuals, and thoughtful restorations. This year's awardees are the Anthology Film Archives, Village Halloween Parade founder Ralph Lee, Greenwich Locksmiths, the Comedy Cellar, Theater for the New City, and the restoration of the 1851 house at 222 East 13th Street for the Bea Arthur Residence, transitional housing for LGBTQ young adults.

We just finished our incredibly successful fundraising House Tour Benefit, in which homeowners, hundreds of volunteers, and local businesses come together to help GVSHP raise nearly 20% of our annual budget in one day, while showcasing some of the most eye-catching homes in our neighborhood.

But summer's not all fun and games. Later this summer we'll find out if the Mayor and City Council will seal the fate of a big slice of the Village and the East Village by turning them into an extension of Midtown South and Silicon Alley, or if the reasonable neighborhood protections we've proposed and fought for will finally be approved. We'll also see if the real estate lobby is able to convince the State Legislature to lift the already-generous cap on the size of residential developments in New York City, allowing the Mayor to 'supersize' developments in communities like ours. And we'll see if a long promised hearing on the Small Business Jobs Survival Act we've been fighting for takes place, and finally leads to some movement on this long overdue bill to help protect small businesses.

Summer's here. There's much to celebrate. And much work to be done.

Andrew Berman

## Acknowledgments

GVSHP gratefully acknowledges grants in support of our work from Bank of America, Joan K. Davidson (The J.M. Kaplan Fund), Lynne Waxman Foundation, Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, the Achelis & Bodman Foundation, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, The Kaplen Brothers Fund, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, New York State Assembly Member Deborah Glick through the New York State Office of Parks Recreation & Historic Preservation, and City Council Corey Johnson and Margaret Chin through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

We also gratefully acknowledge in-kind support from the Estate of Fred W. McDarrah, Gourmet Garage, Veselka, Murray's Cheese, Frederick Wildman and Sons Ltd., the Whitney Museum of American Art, The New York Studio School, Salmagundi Club, Two Boots Pizza, Doyle Partners, and Union Square Events.

## Bulletin Board

**Stay in the Know** Join our email list for alerts on critical preservation and development issues—[gvshp.org/email](mailto:gvshp.org/email). See the latest applications for changes to landmarked properties in our neighborhoods at [gvshp.org/lpc](http://gvshp.org/lpc).

**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](http://gvshp.org/blog).

**Get with the Program!** Upcoming lectures, book talks, walking tours, and panel discussions are listed at [gvshp.org/programs](http://gvshp.org/programs); past program videos are at [gvshp.org/pastprograms](http://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](http://gvshp.org/kidsed).

**Access new or old applications for changes to landmarked properties in our neighborhood and find out how you can affect the outcome**—go to [www.gvshp.org/lpc](http://www.gvshp.org/lpc).

**Planned Giving**—make a legacy gift to GVSHP. Call 212/475-9585 x39.

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# Greenwich Village

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