



Greenwich Village

SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

THE ANTHEMION
WINTER/SPRING
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NEWSLETTER

South Village Landmark Victory!

*Ten Year Preservation Campaign
Preserves Endangered Historic Area*

GVSHP scored a huge victory in December when the City landmarked the third and final phase of our proposed South Village Historic District. First proposed in 2006, the first phase was landmarked in 2010, and the second in 2013. All told, GVSHP was able to secure landmark protections for more than 625 buildings on nearly forty blocks.

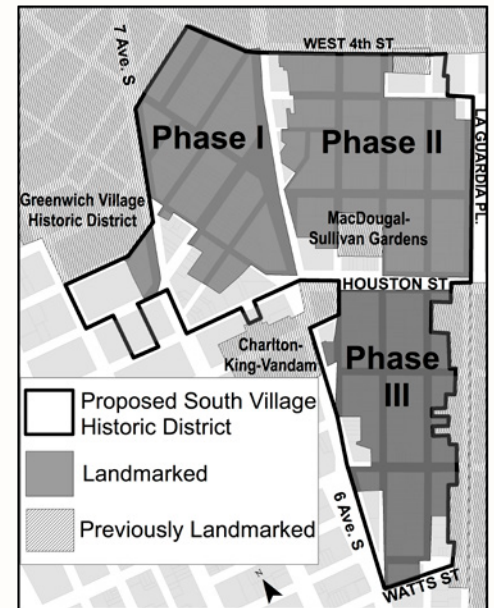


St. Anthony of Padua Church and Sullivan Street.

This section of the Village was not included when the Greenwich Village Historic District was landmarked in 1969, largely because of its immigrant, working-class architecture. Tenements and altered rowhouses, no matter how colorful, charming, or connected to our city and nation's history, were not considered the stuff of preservation in the 1960's. GVSHP has worked hard to change that.

The two earlier phases which were landmarked north of Houston Street include what many consider the heart of the Village, along with countless sites connected to the Village's 20th century bohemian and countercultural history. The final phase, which the City had refused to designate for over a decade, includes St. Anthony of Padua Church (1886), the nation's oldest extant Italian-American church built for the very first Italian-American parish, and a great array of sites connected to immigrant history, from the old Vesuvio Bakery to model tenements built by Italian-American organizations in the early 20th century.

Landmarking did not come a moment too soon. Developers including Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner have bought up properties in the area; current zoning allows towers up to 300 ft. tall; and several historic buildings were lost in recent years. GVSHP successfully fought off attempts by the Real Estate Board of NY to shrink the boundaries and exclude dozens of buildings and vacant lots on Houston Street.



One can walk down the streets of this final phase of the South Village Historic District and feel transported back in time to the turn of the last century, during the last great wave of immigration to our city and country. GVSHP is proud to not only protect this area's charming architecture and human scale, but to honor its immigrant heritage – more important now than ever to remember.

With this designation, GVSHP has secured landmark designation of more than 1,250 buildings since 2003. Councilmember Corey Johnson was key to this victory; read more on p. 2 and at gvshp.org/sovil.

Neighborhood Protections Won In St. John's/ Pier 40 Plan

Limits on Air Rights, Traffic, & Retail Part of Deal

We won a huge victory in December when the City Council, led by Councilmember Corey Johnson, agreed to include far-reaching landmark and zoning protections GVSHP had called for, and other changes, in approvals for a new development on the 3-block St. John's Terminal site at Washington and West Streets.

The Society demanded, and with Councilmember Johnson's support got, landmark designation of the nearby final phase of our proposed South Village Historic District as a precondition for any deal (see

p.1). GVSHP also got protections against any future air rights transfers from the Hudson River Park to within the Village. This was critical because in 2013 state legislation enabled over a million and a half square feet of air rights from commercial piers within the Hudson River Park to be transferred inland to park-adjacent neighborhoods like the Village, thus greatly increasing the potential for overdevelopment here. Under the deal, a fraction of those air rights will be sold for the development on the St. John's site to pay for \$100 million in emergency repairs to Pier 40 and its public parking and playing fields. But the rest of the Village is protected from any of the remaining air rights ever being used within our neighborhood – a huge win!

Additionally, GVSHP called for and got the oversized “big box” stores and “destination retail” removed from the planned

development, which would have attracted huge amounts of vehicular traffic from across the region. With the exception of a supermarket and a health club (open to the public at affordable prices), stores will be limited to no more than 10,000 sq. ft.

These wins will pay huge dividends for the future, protecting the South and West Village from overdevelopment and crippling traffic. This also brings to nearly one hundred the total number of blocks in our neighborhood for which GVSHP has won zoning protections

There were aspects of the deal GVSHP was less enthused about. The planned development will be huge, and we believe there are alternatives to the sale of air rights which we and other community groups have called for that are smarter and fairer ways of generating revenue for the park.

But had the Council simply rejected this deal, rather than modifying it and fighting for changes and additional protections, a huge development could still have been built here. Such a development would have to be entirely commercial (office, hotel, event space, etc.) and therefore much more impactful and generate much more traffic than the predominantly residential development now planned, which includes 476 units of middle and low income housing, many reserved for seniors. The approved development's height is capped at about 450 feet (still way too tall, we thought) rather than the 600 feet planned for the commercial development, and must include indoor and outdoor publicly accessible space.

GVSHP is incredibly grateful to the thousands who wrote letters and attended hearings to make this possible, and to Councilmember Johnson for negotiating the final deal. Read more at gvshp.org/stjohn.



Pier 40 (foreground, left) with the St. John's Terminal behind it on right. The deal prevented more than a million square feet of air rights from being transferred into our neighborhood.

City Allows Demo of “Landmark Eligible” East Village Buildings

*Goes Back on Prior Rulings,
Lets Hotels Replace Housing*

Twice this past year the City rejected calls from GVSHP and allied community groups to save historic East Village buildings which the City itself had ruled “landmark eligible.”

On East 11th Street, a hotel developer bought five ca. 1890 Beaux Arts tenements at 112-120 East 11th Street (3rd/4th Avenues), across from Webster Hall. These beautifully preserved, intricately detailed buildings housed generations of immigrants and artists, including a young Pete Seeger and his brothers. From our daily monitoring of Department of Buildings records, GVSHP found that a new owner was seeking permits to demolish the five buildings and replace permanent housing (some affordable) for long-term tenants with a transient hotel geared towards young, party-hopping travelers.

GVSHP and our allies immediately asked the City to finally move ahead with landmark

designation of the buildings, which in 2008 they had determined merited landmark designation. But the City stonewalled and refused to respond. Since the developer was using non-union labor and contractors who’d been found to have cheated and endangered workers, we were joined by unions and labor groups, as well as neighbors, to protest the approvals.

The City eventually responded, saying they would not landmark the properties, and issued demolition permits. But nothing had changed since 2008 about the buildings except the owner – it was now a donor to and political supporter of the Mayor’s, whom he had recently appointed to the city’s Economic Development Corporation board. Demolition of the buildings is now underway.

Sadly, history repeated itself this fall when GVSHP also discovered permit applications to demolish 264 East 7th Street (Ave. C/D), an 1842 house built for merchants connected to the neighboring East River ‘Dry Dock’ district, once the heart of New York’s waterfront. By the late 19th century the house and its neighbors were dubbed “Political Row” for the unrivalled collection of municipal leaders and political institutions

located here. In the 1980’s the illustrator of the children’s book “If You Give A Mouse A Cookie” lived there; the house actually inspired the book’s illustrations.

Here again GVSHP and our allies reached out to the City and urged them to move ahead with the landmark designation the City itself had found this and neighboring houses merited in 2008. But once again, over the protests of GVSHP and neighbors, the City refused, instead approving the demolition. The demolition work has not yet commenced, and there are efforts to convince the new owner to drop the demolition plan.

The City’s refusal to landmark these historic properties it once called “landmark eligible” reflects the extremely challenging environment we face right now at City Hall, and an ongoing lack of necessary landmark protections in the East Village – a situation GVSHP is working to remedy. One bright spot: due to East Village rezonings GVSHP was able to help secure in 2008 and 2010, any new construction on these sites would have to be considerably less oversized and out of scale than prior zoning would have allowed. See gvshp.org/e7&11 for more info.



(l.) 112-120 East 11th Street; (m.) 264 East 7th Street (left side of picture) with neighbors; (r.) GVSHP protested the City allowing these buildings to be demolished.

Protecting the East Village's Rich Cultural Heritage

Artistic Legacy Manifests in Lampposts, Sidewalks & Schools

GVSHP has been working hard to see the return of the beloved and world-renowned **Astor Place Mosaic Lampposts**, which were removed to accommodate the reconstruction of that intersection and neighboring Cooper Square to create more pedestrian public space. When plans for the renovation were announced, the mosaic lampposts' return was one of three main priorities GVSHP fought for. The other two priorities were the repair and return of the Alamo ("the Cube") sculpture, and preserving a visible marking of the paths of historic streets like Astor Place and Stuyvesant Street (which are among the city's very oldest) within the new pedestrianized space.

The return of the Alamo and the memorializing of the historic street patterns were done, with relative ease. But restoring the meticulously detailed mosaic lampposts, by artist Jim ("Mosaic Man") Power, was much more challenging and took longer. Working with the Village Alliance BID and City Lore, GVSHP helped find Mr. Power a workspace to do the incredibly elaborate restorative work, raise funds for the restoration, and negotiate the delicate



One of the re-installed Astor Place Mosaic Poles (credit: Julie Powell)

relationship between the artist and government agencies necessary to achieve this goal. We are proud to say that nearly all of the dazzling lampposts, adorned with images of the East Village's history, have been restored and returned, with the final posts now being completed.

Another East Village cultural treasure GVSHP is working to save is the **Yiddish Walk of Fame** on 2nd Avenue.

Created by 2nd Avenue Deli proprietor Abe Lebewohl in 1985 in front of his establishment at 10th Street, these granite plaques honor the greats of Yiddish theater. It also marks 2nd Avenue's early 20th century role as the 'Yiddish Rialto,' one of New York's premiere entertainment districts.

Since the Deli moved uptown in 2006, the Walk has been orphaned and deteriorated rapidly. GVSHP has spearheaded and organized an effort by neighbors, preservationists, and Jewish historians to rescue the Walk and find a permanent public home nearby. A variety of options are being explored, and a feasibility study and conditions report have been conducted. See gvshp.org/yiddish for more info.

The former P.S. 64 at 605 East 9th Street (east of Avenue B) housed the Charas-El Bohio Center



Many of the stars on the Yiddish Walk of Fame have suffered cracks and deterioration.

for two decades until the late 1990's. In spite of the tremendous contributions this cultural and community center made to this neighborhood and our city during one of its most distressed periods, the City closed it and sold the building to a developer, who planned to replace it with a high rise dorm. GVSHP helped get the building, an influential pioneer of early progressive educational design by one of our city's most renowned school architects, landmarked in 2005, thwarting the dorm plan. But the owner continues to allow the building to deteriorate, and has sought to fill it with questionable uses that skirt deed restrictions and city regulations.

GVSHP is working with allied community groups to try to return the building to a community use, and to fight a current effort by the developer and Buildings Department to skirt regulations to occupy the building. The developer has hired the same lobbyist involved in the scandalous lifting of deed restrictions at nearby Rivington House to get favorable rulings from the City to allow his project to proceed. GVSHP is urging local elected officials to ask the Mayor to intervene before it is too late. More at gvshp.org/oldps64.

Monitoring New Building Plans Across Our Neighborhoods

Making Sure Landmark & Zoning Protections Matter

Each day, GVSHP monitors all 6,500 building lots across our neighborhoods for demolition, new construction, or major alteration permit applications. We also monitor all 3,500 landmarked properties in our neighborhoods for applications seeking approvals to change those properties. Here are just a few of the more prominent recent applications:

85-89 Jane Street: We are pleased to report that a proposal to substantially alter these landmarked buildings by adding (among other elements) 80-90 ft. tall glass and concrete towers was rejected by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). GVSHP vigorously opposed this application. The owner came back with a much better plan to renovate the properties and add a much more discrete and appropriate addition, which was approved.

11 Jane Street: GVSHP also vigorously opposed an application to replace a ‘non-contributing’

2-story garage in the Greenwich Village Historic District with an oversized 95 ft. tall apartment building with a grid-like façade more appropriate for an office park than a Village residential sidestreet. The LPC pushed back moderately on the design, and asked the applicant for revisions. We would have preferred a rejection or request for dramatic revisions. No new design has yet been submitted.

156-162 Perry Street (Washington/West): Plans were filed to demolish these four 1-3 story buildings and replace them with a 6-story apartment building. Because these buildings are not landmarked (unlike those on Jane Street), no special approvals are needed for the demolition or new design. However, GVSHP did get these sites and much of the Far West Village rezoned in 2005, putting in place height caps on new construction where none existed before (these sites had the same zoning as the nearby Meier Tower hi-rises). GVSHP will closely monitor plans, but applications filed appear to conform with the zoning restrictions we fought for.

313 East 13th Street (2nd/1st): Plans have been filed to demolish this 15-story concrete hi-rise as part of plans to revamp the hospital to which it is attached. Zoning restrictions passed

since the original building was built limit new construction to a much lower height. No new building plans have been filed yet. GVSHP will continue to closely monitor the site.

Keller Hotel (150 Barrow at West) and 144 Barrow: GVSHP got the Keller Hotel landmarked in 2007. Plans were recently filed to convert it to a hotel (it had functioned as a single room occupancy hotel/residence previously) and to add a floor to the building. Any additions or façade alterations would require landmarks public hearings and approval; no application has been filed yet. Plans have also been filed to demolish the neighboring (non-landmarked) 1-story garage at 144 Barrow Street, and replace it with a 7-story residential building. GVSHP got this site rezoned in 2005 like those on Perry Street, severely limiting the size of new construction as compared to what was previously allowed. We will closely monitor to ensure plans conform with these limits, which current applications appear to.

55 and 69 Gansevoort Street: GVSHP got these buildings and much of the rest of the Meatpacking District landmarked in 2003. 69 Gansevoort was home to Florent Restaurant; GVSHP found a new business made some façade changes not approved by the LPC, and the LPC had mistakenly approved other façade changes. Since we raised this, most of the original features of the building have now been restored. GVSHP also strongly opposed an unnecessary and highly visible rooftop addition proposed for the Flatiron-shaped building at 55 Gansevoort, immortalized by a 1936 Berenice Abbott photo. The LPC rejected the application.

To see all current and recent landmarks applications in our neighborhood, go to gvshp.org/lpc.



Original proposal for 85-89 Jane Street.



156-162 Perry Street



55 Gansevoort Street

New Plaques Honor Basquiat, Gross

In July GVSHP and partner Two Boots unveiled a plaque marking the former home and studio of Jean-Michel Basquiat at 57 Great Jones Street in NoHo. Basquiat created some of the greatest works of his career here from 1983 until his death in 1988, in a former stable owned by friend and mentor Andy Warhol. One of the great American artists of the late 20th century, the themes in Basquiat's work of race, class, and high and low art remain highly resonant today. We were joined by collaborators and students of Basquiat's for the unveiling.



In October we unveiled a plaque marking the former studio and home of sculptor Chaim Gross at 526 LaGuardia Place, now the Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation. Gross was an immigrant from the Carpathian Mountains whose works grace public spaces and museums throughout New York and the world. He lived and worked here from 1962 until his death in 1991. The space, now open to the public, houses more than 10,000 objects of art by Gross and from his collection of modern, African, Oceanic, Pre-Columbian, American, and European art.

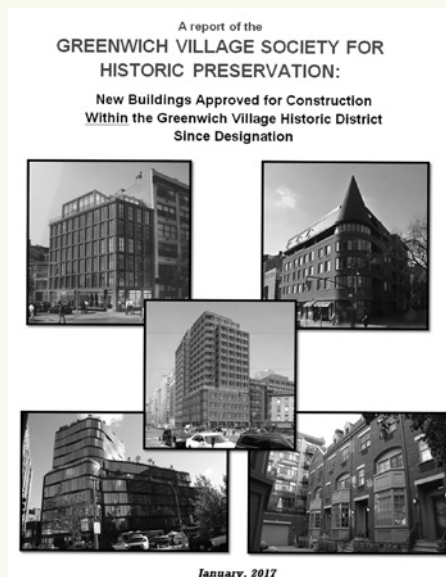
*in
brief*

GVSHP and Two Boots add two new plaques each year. Previous plaques marked the homes of James Baldwin and Frank O'Hara; the former sites of the Fillmore East and San Remo Café; and Martha Graham's Dance Studio. See gvshp.org/plaques

New Buildings Report

In January GVSHP released a report documenting all new buildings constructed in the Greenwich Village Historic District since its designation in 1969. Surprisingly, neither the Landmarks Preservation Commission nor any other city agency keeps a comprehensive record of new buildings approved in historic districts. GVSHP felt it was important to document all such approvals.

This report is particularly useful now as applications for new buildings in our historic districts reach an all-time high, providing a context for evaluating such applications and seeing what has been approved before. The record is interesting, showing thoughtful and sensitive designs that have become



modern classics, and head-scratchers that make one wonder what the Commission was thinking. They range from tiny structures and rowhouses to enormous apartment and institutional buildings; from historicist to post-modern to contemporary designs. View the report at gvshp.org/newbuilding.



Cafe Society, the first integrated club in New York City and where Billie Holiday premiered 'Strange Fruit,' was located here. From GVSHP's Civil Rights Map.

Mapping Civil Rights History

The Village, East Village, and NoHo contain an unparalleled array of sites connected to civil rights history and social justice movements. Now more than ever it's important to remember how our communities were part of the ongoing struggles for equality for African-Americans, women, Latinos, immigrants, workers, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

To do this, GVSHP has created a Civil Rights map of our neighborhoods that includes everything from well-known sites like Stonewall to some of our city's first African-American and abolitionist churches. It shows where birth control in America began, where the Young Lords and the ACLU were founded, where Lorraine Hansberry lived and wrote, and where the NAACP's iconic "A Man Was Lynched Yesterday" flag flew. View it at gvshp.org/civilrightsmap.

From the Director

The past year was a momentous one for GVSHP. After more than ten years, we finally secured landmark status for almost all of the South Village, over the opposition of the Real Estate Board of NY. After an enormous struggle, we were able to get restrictions on air rights transfers from the Hudson River Park into our neighborhood, protecting it from overdevelopment. We blocked most of the Mayor's plan to roll back our zoning protections in the East and West Village. We managed to remove the worst elements from a City Council bill designed to make landmarking harder and demolition of historic properties easier. And we stopped a woefully out-of-scale and potentially precedent-setting development at 85 Jane Street.



2017 promises to be equally challenging. Governor Cuomo has given the MTA the power to ignore all zoning restrictions in our neighborhoods. The Mayor is seeking to lift caps on the size of new residential development, and continues to oppose our rezoning of the University Place/Broadway corridor to prevent more 300 ft. tall towers there. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has allowed demolition of several "landmark eligible" buildings in the East Village, and approved totally inappropriate new construction in landmarked areas in the Meatpacking District and next to St. Luke's Church.

But GVSHP continues to fight for preservation, and for our neighborhoods. Conscious of trends in the world around us, we are highlighting our neighborhood's critical historic role as a point of entry for immigrants, leader in civil rights efforts, and incubator for progressive, artistic, and intellectual movements. In many respects, preserving the Village seems more important now than ever.



Acknowledgments

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Bulletin Board

Save the Date! GVSHP's Annual Benefit House Tour is Sun., 5/7/2017.

Stay Up To Date: Join our email list for alerts on critical preservation and development issues—gvshp.org/email.

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.

Explore Historic Images of our neighborhood at GVSHP's Historic Image Archive—gvshp.org/archive.

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 in city schools 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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