



## Tech Hub Upzoning Approved Without Neighborhood Protections

### *Broken Promises & Ongoing Tech Expansion Present Big Challenges*

In August, City Councilmember Carlina Rivera brokered Council approval for the Mayor's upzoning for a 'Tech Hub' on 14th Street. During and after her campaign for office, Councilmember Rivera promised that she would only support the Tech Hub rezoning (which required Council approval) if the comprehensive neighborhood protections GVSHP and many others said were necessary to prevent the surrounding neighborhood from turning into an extension of 'Silicon Alley' were included. In spite of this promise, they were not.

Unfortunately, the approval will likely accelerate the demolitions and out-of-scale and out-of-character new development we are seeing in the affected area south of the planned Tech Hub, between Fifth and Third Avenues. The deal between Rivera and the Mayor provided a fraction of a fraction of the protections we had been calling for, and will do almost nothing to mitigate the impact of the upzoning and the new development. Over the last few years, we have seen historic and/or low-scale buildings replaced by 300 ft. tall office or condo towers and 300 room hotels. The historic former St. Denis Hotel at Broadway and 11th Street, where Lincoln, Grant, and Alexander Graham Bell once stayed, is being demolished to make way for a large glass office tower, likely to house tech firms.

But we are not giving up. Out of nearly two hundred buildings GVSHP identified as needing and warranting landmark protection in the area affected by the upzoning, Rivera's deal with the Mayor includes consideration of just seven buildings, almost all of which are 'overbuilt' under current zoning and therefore face no danger. GVSHP used the occasion of the December hearing on the proposed landmarking of the seven buildings to highlight the dozens of other similar buildings in the neighborhood which are equally worthy of consideration for landmark designation (if not more so), and more endangered. We are pushing the Commission to consider comprehensive historic district designation for the area, rather than cherry picking seven buildings which face no immediate threat.

With the approval of the 14th Street Tech Hub upzoning, and recent announcements by Google of its expansion in the Hudson Square area, the ongoing pressure on neighborhoods like Greenwich Village, the East Village, and the Meatpacking District from tech-related development will only increase. Areas like much of 14th Street, much of the area between Fifth and Third Avenues south of Union Square, and the Meatpacking District allow the development of office buildings. Until recently, such development was unheard of in these areas. But the expanding tech sector tends to like untraditional neighborhoods,

outside of the established business districts like Midtown or the Financial District.

While the tech sector is an increasingly important part of New York's economy, development lacking appropriate regulation can lead to demolition of historic buildings, out-of-scale new construction, and a fundamental change in the character of neighborhoods. For example, the St. Denis used to house scores of therapists, massage therapists, and antique dealers. Several buildings on St. Mark's Place and Third Avenue which housed small businesses are being demolished to make way for a boutique tech office building, and similar office buildings are rising in the Meatpacking District.

In spite of these strong headwinds, GVSHP is continuing to fight to preserve these neighborhoods' historic buildings, scale, and character.



GVSHP Exec. Dir. Andrew Berman leading a protest against the demolition of the St. Denis Hotel.

# New Push for East Village Landmarking

## Campaign Launched to Celebrate & Protect Neighborhood History

GVSHP has launched a campaign to expand landmark protections in the East Village, as well as to highlight and share with the public the neighborhood's rich history extending across six centuries.

In late 2018, GVSHP and allied East Village and preservation organizations met with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to share research we've compiled about the history of the neighborhood, and to argue for the need for expanded landmark protections. Since receiving a 2008 grant from Preserve NY (a grant program of the NY State Council on the Arts and the Preservation League of NY State), GVSHP has been conducting extensive building-by-building research on the neighborhood, and commissioned a highly respected architectural historian to

provide a comprehensive overview of the neighborhood's architectural and cultural history.

This has resulted in two products GVSHP was proud to release in early 2019: our report, "A History of The East Village and Its Architecture" by Francis Morrone, and our new interactive online tool "East Village Building Blocks," which contains historic information about every one of over 2,200 buildings in the East Village, including date of construction, architect, original use, and alterations over time.

The Morrone report provides a fascinating look at the East Village, its culture, and its built environment, from the first Dutch settlement in the 17th century, to the neighborhood's urbanization in the 19th century – first as a home to prosperous merchants, then as a gateway for immigrants – to its dramatic transformation in the later 20th century due to abandonment, urban renewal, homesteading and reclamation, and an incredibly vibrant artistic, political, and cultural scene emanating from artists, musicians, and newcomers from Puerto Rico and Eastern Europe. Read the report at [gvshp.org/morrone](http://gvshp.org/morrone).

Our new East Village Building Blocks website allows you to take a deep dive into the history of every building in the East Village. You can view original permits for building construction or alteration, tax records, historic maps, and images of the buildings over time, and in many cases find out what used to be on the site and important historic figures, events, businesses or institutions associated with the site. You can also add information and curate your own tour of the neighborhood, and search by architect, building type or style, year of construction, and address. The stories behind the buildings, which include two hundred year old houses, houses of worship, factories, movie



### A History of the East Village and Its Architecture

by Francis Morrone

with chapters by Rebecca Amato and Jean Arrington

December, 2018  
Commissioned by the  
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation  
232 East Eleventh Street  
New York, NY 10003

Report funded by Preserve New York, a grant program of the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts

houses, civic and charitable institutions, and lots and lots of tenements, are often fascinating and surprising. Explore them all at [gvshp.org/buildingblocks](http://gvshp.org/buildingblocks).

GVSHP and our allies are using these and other tools to argue for expanded landmark protections for this neighborhood. Just a tiny fraction of the neighborhood's considerable historic resources enjoy landmark protections, most of which date to as recently as 2012. While such landmark designations and the 2008 rezoning GVSHP and others successfully fought for has reduced demolitions in the neighborhood considerably (as well as out-of-scale new construction), historic buildings are still being lost, stripped of detail, or compromised with unsympathetic additions.

To help prevent this, and as part of our campaign to secure more landmark protections for the neighborhood, we're asking the public to send letters to the Mayor and Landmarks Chair supporting such designations. You can do so at [gvshp.org/eastvillagelandmark](http://gvshp.org/eastvillagelandmark).

**East Village Building Blocks**

Home Guided Tours Block Finder Glossary

206-208 East 9th Street | Block : 464 | Lot #13

Building Date : 1885-86  
Original Use : Residential  
Original Owner : James Thomson  
Original Architect : George Browne Post

**Description & Building Alterations**  
This ornate building at 206-208 East 9th Street was constructed in 1885-86 by George Browne Post for James Thomson as a French Flat. Eleven families were to inhabit the brick and terra cotta five-story building. The building is six bays wide and features an arched decorative terra cotta panel above each of the windows. George Post was an immensely important architect whose credits by this time included the Long Island Historical Society (1876-81) in Brooklyn Heights and the Williamsburgh Savings Bank (1870-75) on Broadway and Chgoe Avenue in Williamsburg.

As he had done at the Long Island Historical Society, Post matched the color of his terra-cotta ornamentation and of his mortar to that of the brick. The facade is powerfully rhythmic with each floor a row of six square-headed windows in arched frames, with exquisite terra-cotta work adorning the spaces. The building's windows in gold script over the front door is one of the loveliest details in the East Village. The building was part of a wave of French flats built throughout the greater area of which this is the easternmost point.

**View another building**  
Go to this block : 464  
Previous Building | Next Building

**Tags**  
French Flat George Browne Post, James Thomson, residential

**More building photos**

**Additional resources**  
Historic Documents  
Department of Buildings Permits  
Historic Photos  
1980s tax photo, Department of Records

**Maps + Street View**  
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**Share this Building**

**What is the Building Blocks Project**  
What does a building mean to someone who lives there? A person who lives on the block? In the neighborhood? In the city? This site presents a wealth of historic information gathered from GVSHP's architectural research survey about the buildings located in the East Village.  
The site explores the area generally.

More stories about this building

## Fight to Save Small Businesses Moves to City Hall

### *GVSHP Supports Legislation, Other Measures to Protect Local Retail*

This fall the City Council held a marathon, all-day hearing on the Small Business Jobs Survival Act (SBJSA), legislation GVSHP strongly supports which has been introduced in the Council for over thirty years. In spite of broad support among Councilmembers, it has rarely received a hearing, and never received a vote. GVSHP is part of a coalition which demanded a hearing finally be granted on the bill, which newly-elected Speaker Corey Johnson promised and provided. Local Councilmembers Margaret Chin and Carlina Rivera are co-sponsors of the legislation.

The bill would help combat situations where small businesses in good standing are not even offered lease renewals for their spaces, and landlords allow spaces to remain empty for months or years while they seek an astronomical price for the space. The bill would require tenants in good standing to be offered up to a ten year lease renewal at mutually agreeable terms. If those terms cannot be agreed upon, they would be set by binding arbitration, based upon fair market value for the space. GVSHP is working with fellow advocates and the Speaker's office to try to ensure that the bill advances, even as it may be modified to address some legitimate concerns about its current form.

GVSHP is also working with advocates in the East Village to pursue 'Special District' zoning regulations that would limit the location of chain stores. Such measures have never been implemented in New York City, but have in other municipalities. For a variety of reasons the East Village would be an ideal place to introduce such a measure, including because



GVSHP was part of a broad coalition which turned out at City Hall to call for the passage of the SBJSA.

there is a local merchant's group which strongly supports such restrictions. The proposal is slowly advancing at Community Board #3. If you would like to sign our petition in support of the Special District, go to [gvshp.org/specialdistrict](http://gvshp.org/specialdistrict).

We are also looking at other measures which might help address the blight of retail vacancy and the tendency of some landlords to refuse to renew leases and keep spaces empty. One such possibility is a vacancy tax for retail spaces, which is also under discussion right now. GVSHP also continues to try to support and promote local small businesses with our Annual Village Awards, by participating in the #ShopBleecker program, and with our Business of the Month (BoM) program. With BoM, GVSHP reaches thousands of people each month with the story behind a unique, independently-owned local business which we encourage the public

to patronize. If you want to nominate a favorite local business (or more than one!), just go to [gvshp.org/bom](http://gvshp.org/bom).

Clearly, more needs to be done to help preserve our local small businesses. In recent months we have seen Integral Yoga Natural Foods close after forty-five years, the Cornelia Street Café after forty-one years, Tortilla Flats and Caffe Vivaldi each after thirty-five years, and Uncle Sam's Army-Navy Store after twenty years, to name just a few. Our small businesses are an essential part of the character and spirit of our neighborhoods, and are part of what makes them distinct from every place else. In some cases, they also just provide essential services like a place to buy a quart of milk or household goods that you can't easily get elsewhere. GVSHP considers it a critical part of our mission to work to try to keep these businesses open and thriving in our *neighborhoods*.



## Big Changes at the Landmarks Preservation Commission

*New Chair Has Preservation Credentials; Rules Modified to Include the Public*

There have been big changes at the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), the city agency which regulates and oversees all landmarked properties and decides which properties will be landmarked. This includes about 3,500 landmarked properties in our neighborhoods, or about half of their building stock, so the functioning of the LPC is of enormous importance to us.

This past spring, the Chair of the LPC announced she would be stepping down after her proposal to change the rules governing public review of applications for significant changes to landmarked properties faced a huge backlash, including from GVSHP. The proposal would have cut the public out of the process for many significant changes to landmarked properties which currently must undergo public review, in which the public is notified of the application and has the opportunity to submit information or comments about the proposal. Under the (now-former) chair's plan, many such applications would have no longer been open to public comment or review, and the public would not be notified of the proposed changes; all such decisions would be made internally by the LPC without public involvement.

Following these developments, GVSHP spearheaded two campaigns we felt were

critical to preservation efforts. First, we demanded that the next Chair of the LPC, chosen by the Mayor but approved by the City Council, have actual experience, training, and credentials as a preservationist (neither the outgoing chair nor several prior chairs did). Second, we mobilized to prevent adoption of the elements of the proposed LPC rules changes that would limit public oversight and knowledge of proposed major changes to landmarked properties. We are happy to report we were successful with both.

GVSHP and our members generated thousands of letters to the City Council and the Mayor calling for the new LPC Chair to be a true preservationist. Following this, Speaker Johnson wrote the Mayor also urging him to choose a new LPC Chair with a preservation background and track record. Given the Council's role in approving the position, this was key to our success. In the fall, the Mayor announced Sarah Carroll as his choice to lead the agency.



New LPC Chair Sarah Carroll

Carroll has worked at the LPC for twenty-four years, most recently as its Director of Preservation and its Executive Director, and is a trained preservationist. She certainly fits the bill in terms of the qualifications and background we called for. Of course the real test of her tenure at the helm of the LPC will be what she does, which largely remains to be seen. But GVSHP has already enjoyed productive conversations with the new Chair and her staff about at least some issues of concern to us.

Under new leadership, the LPC also revised its proposed changes to its rules. Most of



the elements which GVSHP and our allies in preservation found most objectionable were eliminated. Those new rules were passed in December, and kept intact the ability of the public to be notified of and participate in the review process for major proposed changes to landmarked properties, as GVSHP had fought for.

Among the issues we have communicated to the new Chair that we wish to see the LPC address are: 1) the need for expanded landmark protections south of Union Square between Fifth and Third Avenues, which faces tremendous development pressure right now, and in the East Village; 2) better regulation of existing historic districts such as the Greenwich Village Historic District and the Gansevoort Market Historic District, where in recent years the LPC has allowed troubling alterations, demolitions, and new construction; 3) a better response to inaccurate materials being provided by applicants to support proposed changes to landmarked sites, such as was done at 540 Hudson Street; and 4) the need to designate important sites based upon their relation to LGBT history (currently the Stonewall Inn is the only site designated by the LPC based upon LGBT history).

## Helping to Protect the Merchant's House

### *Museum Wins A Big Battle, But the War Is Not Over*

GVSHP has been extremely concerned about plans to build an 8-story hotel on a lot adjacent to the Merchant's House Museum on its west. The Museum, a beloved and invaluable cultural institution and a rare interior and exterior landmark also located within an historic district, has presented credible evidence that such work would cause extensive damage to the its 1832 building, and force the museum to shut its doors for extended periods of time. We all won a big battle to protect the Merchant's House and prevent this from happening in late 2018, but the war is far from over.

Starting in 2012, a developer has sought permission from the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to construct the hotel at 27 East 4th Street, currently occupied by a 1-story garage structure. GVSHP, the Museum, and many concerned preservationists and neighbors strongly opposed that application at the LPC, citing among other factors the danger to the Museum. Unfortunately, the LPC approved the proposal in 2013, leaving the Museum vulnerable.

Fortunately, however, the planned hotel also required a zoning change. After remaining in limbo for five years, the plan re-emerged earlier this year with the zoning change application. GVSHP joined the Merchant's House and many others in mobilizing against the proposal. While the City Planning Commission, controlled by the Mayor, approved the zoning change, it was ultimately turned down by the City Council, where local Councilmember Carlina Rivera opposed it. This stopped the hotel project, at least in its

current form, dead in its tracks.

However, the story does not necessarily end there. The developer could revise his plan for a hotel which does conform with the zoning, and return to the LPC with a revised plan. However, GVSHP is joining the Merchant's House in urging the developer to consider a different path if he intends to continue to seek to build. The developer owns an L-shaped lot which extends to Lafayette Street, upon which 403 Lafayette Street currently sits. That 3-story garage building is located within the NoHo Historic District, and thus any changes there, like at 27 East 4th Street, would require the approval of the LPC.

But there is general agreement that an appropriately-scaled and designed addition could be built on top of 403 Lafayette Street, thus allowing the developer to move ahead with construction plans without endangering the Merchant's House with construction next door. The developer has initially refused to consider such a possibility, but as we go to press has made no announcements about whether he will continue to pursue development of the site next to the Merchant's House, consider the alternative on Lafayette Street, or do nothing.

The situation with the Merchant's House



The Merchant's House Museum, with 27 E. 4th Street to its left.

reflects a fundamental failure on the part of city government. The Museum is owned by the City of New York and is located on city-owned land. Millions of dollars in city funding have gone into its upkeep, restoration, and operation. And yet city agencies like the City Planning Commission and the Landmarks Preservation Commission have approved plans for construction next door that would endanger the Museum and potentially cause millions of dollars in damage and deprive the public of access to this irreplaceable educational, historic, and cultural resource. This is a clear failure on the part of our leaders to appropriately value preservation or the indispensable resource which an institution like the Merchant's House Museum provides to the entire city.





A new image from our Carole Teller Collection, E. 1st Street in the early 1960s.

## More Great Historic Images

We continue to add to our Historic Image Archive, now totaling nearly 2,000 images. The latest additions include a collection capturing the Meatpacking District, Chelsea Market, and the High Line in 2002, before their recent radical transformations; hundreds more images by the incredible photographer Carole Teller of Lower Manhattan, Times Square, the old Penn Station, and more, from the early 1960s to the early 1990s; and dozens of images culled from landmarks applications in our area, including of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, the Old Wanamaker Warehouse on Astor Place, and several old factories in the Meatpacking District and NoHo. We're also proud to partner again with the Estate of Village Voice photographer Fred W. McDarragh to share an amazing curated collection of images of rock stars from the 1960s and 70s, including the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, David Bowie, The Doors, Charles Mingus, and more.

Prints of nearly all these images are available for sale, with the proceeds benefitting GVSHP. See [archive.gvshp.org](http://archive.gvshp.org).

## New Oral Histories Added

This fall we added two great new oral histories to our collection of nearly fifty: preservation architect James Stewart Polshek, and Robert Sanfiz, Director of 'La Naccional'.

Polshek has lived in Greenwich Village since 1955, where his work has focused on complementing the neighborhood's historic architecture, scale, and character. He designed the Washington Court apartments in 1985, and was involved with the renovation of the Grace Church School. Polshek was Dean of Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation from 1972–1987, and created and founded Architects and Planners for Social Responsibility.

Since 2008, Sanfiz has been the Executive Director of La Nacional, the 150-year-old Spanish Benevolent Society on West 14th Street that represents and advocated for the "Little Spain" community. Stretching from Christopher to 23rd Street along the west side, it was once the largest Spanish-American community in New York City. Sanfiz's oral history focuses on the history of the Spanish immigrant community in New York and of La Nacional, and the current challenges they face. Access all our oral histories at [gvshp.org/oralhistory](http://gvshp.org/oralhistory).



## Westbeth Historic Plaque Unveiled

This fall we unveiled our thirteenth historic plaque at Westbeth, a complex of thirteen buildings located between West, Bethune,

Washington and Bank Streets constructed between the 1860s and 1930s, mostly for Bell Telephone Labs. Some of the most important innovations in sound technology were developed or advanced there, including radar, the first talking movies, television, and video telephones. In 1966 Bell left, and the complex was reimagined as housing and workspace

for artists, in one of the first examples of large-scale adaptive re-use of an industrial building for residential purposes, and

one of the first examples of publicly subsidized housing for artists.

Past GVSHP plaques have marked the former homes of James Baldwin, Elizabeth Blackwell, Lorraine Hansberry, Frank O'Hara, Martha Graham, the Fillmore East, the San Remo Café, and many more. Find out more at [gvshp.org/plaque](http://gvshp.org/plaque).

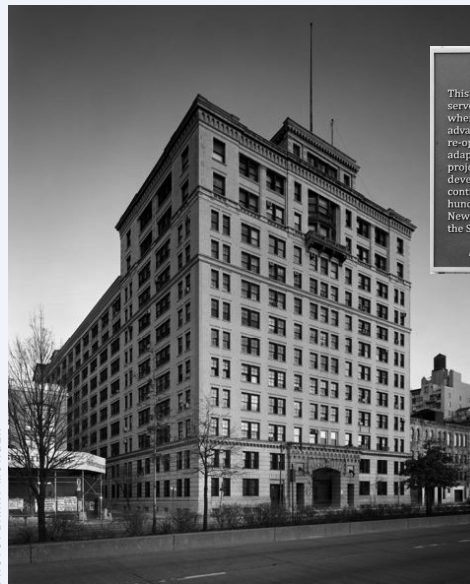


PHOTO: BARRY MUNGER

### Westbeth Artists' Housing

This complex of buildings was built from c. 1860 to 1934. It served as the home of Bell Telephone Labs (1898 to 1966) where many technological innovations were developed or advanced, including radar, television and video telephones. It re-opened in 1970 as Westbeth, an early example of large-scale adaptive re-use of an industrial building. One of the first projects supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and developed in collaboration with the J.M. Kaplan Fund, it continues to provide affordable live-work space to nearly four hundred artists and their families. The complex is a designated New York City and National Historic Landmark, and is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Placed by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

## From the Director

2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Greenwich Village Historic District. One of our city's oldest and still its largest historic district, it's also the main vehicle by which Greenwich Village has preserved its character, scale, and sense of place in the face of overwhelming development pressure. Far from strangling the neighborhood's health and vitality as opponents predicted a half-century ago, the Greenwich Village Historic District is a proverbial poster child for how a neighborhood can prosper and thrive under landmark designation.



Which is not to say there are no challenges. Preservation requires eternal vigilance, and GVSHP monitors and shares with the public every application for major changes to any of the 2,300 buildings in the district (or the 1,200 or so other landmarked buildings in our neighborhoods). It also requires thoughtful regulation and decision-making by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and we have gone toe-to-toe with the Commission on more than one occasion about proposed demolitions, new construction, or alterations we did not think warranted approval. And of course while landmark designation can be helpful in retaining long-term businesses and residents by making demolitions much more difficult, it cannot on its own ensure the maintenance of retail and residential diversity.

But the 50th anniversary of the Greenwich Village Historic District affords an important opportunity to celebrate all that is wonderful about this rare and exceptional neighborhood, the work which has been done to preserve and protect it (as well as to expand those protections, to more than a dozen additional districts and scores of individual landmarks throughout our neighborhoods), and the challenges we still face. GVSHP will spend much of 2019 doing exactly that, with programming, new online tools, and a public celebration and district-wide Open House in April. I hope you'll join us.



## 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, New York State Assembly Member Deborah Glick through the New York State Office of Parks Recreation & Historic Preservation, and City Council Members Corey Johnson and Carlina Rivera through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

We also gratefully acknowledge in-kind support from Carole Teller, Doyle Partners, the Estate of Fred W. McDarrah, First Republic Bank, Gourmet Garage, Murray's Cheese, The New School, The New York Studio School, St. John's in the Village, Salmagundi Club, Two Boots Pizza, Union Square Events, Veselka, Westside Market, and The Whitney Museum of American Art.

## Bulletin Board

**Save the Date** Our Annual Spring Benefit House Tour will be Sunday, May 5.

**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 annually 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).

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# Greenwich Village

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