

Community Board # 3 Full Board Meeting, July 26, 2016

Re: Resolution by Land-Use Committee opposing request for variance
for 435 East 13th Street aka 432 East 14th Street, 2016-4183-BZ



Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

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Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation supports the resolution approved by the Community Board #3 Land Use Committee on July 13, 2016 that opposes the variance application for 435 East 13th Street aka 432 East 14th Street, 2016-4183-BZ.

The complying development would be a mixed residential and commercial building rising eight stories and 80 feet along East 14th Street and seven stories and 75 feet along East 13th Street. The proposed development would be an out-of-context 12 stories on East 14th Street, reaching a height of 124' without a setback.

In New York City, a zoning variance can only be granted by the Board of Standards & Appeals (BSA). In order to obtain a variance, the applicant must meet five criteria called "findings." The applicant has not provided adequate evidence to establish the basis for the requested variances.

The onsite conditions are well known, and widely shared by other projects in the neighborhood that have not sought a variance. The presence of some level of water or softer soil in this part of Manhattan is common and such a variance would set a terrible precedent for future out of context development.

The proposed development would alter the essential character of the neighborhood. The proposal site stretches across East 13th and East 14th Street. The applicant relies on associating the proposed development with the vastly different land-use dynamics of Stuyvesant Town to the north. The Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village residential complex covers roughly 80 acres of land and includes open space for playgrounds and parkland and gathering space with a fountain. That it is an inappropriate comparison by which to evaluate the impact on East Village neighborhood context.

According to a February 2, 2016 summary of site conditions by one of the applicant's consultants, Mueser Ruteledge Consulting Engineers, they state, "the majority of the surrounding buildings are 3-6 story residential buildings which generally only contain one cellar level." This is a more appropriate reference than the vastly different Stuyvesant Town to the north. Other proposals in the immediate vicinity have not sought such a variance and so the presence of a hardship has not been verified.

The comparable retail rentals included in their application do not represent new development and the lucrative ground floor footprint that would be created and therefore do not adequately represent the potential rent revenue for the proposed development.

In conclusion, the proposed development is too high and too bulky and out of context for our neighborhood. Approving this variance would set a terrible precedent for other projects. The applicant has not made a convincing case that the requested variance is the minimum required for a reasonable rate of return. We support the committee resolution to oppose the variance application.