



Greenwich
Village
Society for
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Preservation

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TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN OPPOSITION TO INTRO. 775 NYC COUNCIL LAND USE COMMITTEE September 9, 2015

I am Andrew Berman, Executive Director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the largest membership organization in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. We firmly oppose Intro. 775, an unnecessary bill granting enormous advantage to demolition-minded developers, while restricting efforts to preserve and protect New York's historic landmarks and neighborhoods.

A few key points to consider about Intro. 775:

- Had the bill been in effect over the last fifty years, more than half our city's landmarked structures would not have met its deadlines and might easily have been destroyed, including Grand Central Station, the Woolworth Building, Rockefeller Center, and historic districts in Greenwich Village, the Grand Concourse, Bedford Stuyvesant, West Harlem, Jackson Heights, and Park Slope.
- Proposed landmarks that have languished for years without final votes currently affects 95 structures or 0.3% of all buildings ever considered for landmarking in New York City. This is now being addressed by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, making the bill's rationale moot. By contrast, the number of worthy landmarked structures which 775 would have kept from being designated is over 17,000, or more than 170 times greater than the tiny problem this bill purports to solve.
- Intro. 775 provides no additional resources to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to meet its new requirements, but imposes a five-year moratorium on reconsideration if deadlines are not met, during which time demolitions can proceed.
- Rather than promoting speedy action or predictable timelines, Intro. 775 encourages obstruction and delay by resistant developers, for the first time enabling them to "run out the clock."
- The slowest designations are typically larger districts or more controversial sites, often in underserved communities. Rather than promoting careful consideration or consensus-building in these cases, Intro. 775 will likely discourage the Commission from taking up such proposals which don't easily meet the strict deadlines.

The reality is very few buildings remain under consideration for landmark designation for extended periods of time without designation. The few which currently are will soon be decided by the LPC. And the burden these properties bear is quite minor, namely that buildings permits might take slightly longer to secure while the LPC has the option of reviewing these applications if they choose.

But these twin boogey-men of huge backlogs and overburdened property owners are being used to justify a draconian, overreaching measure which will gut one of New York's most successful laws—one which helps stabilize neighborhoods, promote investment, and preserve and protect what many love most about New York. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater; vote no on Intro. 775.