

# NEWS VILLAGE PRESERVATION

## GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

SPRING/SUMMER  
2019 NEWSLETTER

## GREENWICH VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT TURNS 50!

*CELEBRATING A HALF CENTURY  
OF PRICELESS PRESERVATION*

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY of the designation of the Greenwich Village Historic District, one of the city's oldest and still its largest landmark district. This incredible preservation achievement in April, 1969 was the result of tireless activism, and granted landmark protections to much, but not all, of Greenwich Village.

Village Preservation has a special relationship to the Greenwich Village Historic District. When founded in 1980, our mission was to act as caretaker for the existing district. Since then our mission has grown to include expanding landmark designations to other parts of Greenwich Village, as well as to NoHo, the Meatpacking District, and the East Village, and to focus on additional issues like zoning and preservation of small businesses and cultural institutions, resulting in



THE 1822 WOODEN HOUSE AT 17 GROVE STREET,  
FROM OUR GVHD50 MAP AND TOUR.



the landmarking of over 1,250 buildings and zoning protections for nearly 100 blocks.

But the Greenwich Village Historic District remains in many ways the jewel in the crown of historic preservation in New York City, and at the heart of our work. Protecting over 2,200 buildings on nearly 100 blocks, it includes an incomparable array of architecture and sites connected to significant historic events and people, especially in the realm of the arts and activism.

We took many steps to highlight this amazing milestone. In April we held a weekend-long historic district "Open House" where churches, theaters, schools, galleries, and local businesses opened their doors to the public with special tours and offers, while we held a festive, music-filled celebration in Washington Square. We then launched an online "then and now" tour of the district showing every building in 1969 and today, along with tours of artists' homes, historic sites, charming architecture, street name origins, immigration landmarks, homes of

great women, and more—see it at [gvshp.org/gvhd50tour](http://gvshp.org/gvhd50tour).

Throughout the year, we're also staging dozens of programs about how the district came to be; how it's expanded over the years; what still needs to be done; some of its great cultural institutions; the challenges it faces; and the great successes it has accomplished.

Engaging the public around the many treasures of the Greenwich Village Historic District on its 50th anniversary is more than just an excuse for celebration. There are powerful forces in government, the real estate industry, and the media, seeking to weaken or even undo the landmark protections we have achieved, and promulgating the myth that these protections are harmful to our city. It's critical that we demonstrate the value of our historic districts and the immeasurable contributions they make to the lifeblood of our city, and provide a clear rationale for why they should continue to be protected.

Read more at [www.gvshp.org/gvhd50](http://www.gvshp.org/gvhd50).





SOME OF THE MANY HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN THIS AREA WE HAVE PROPOSED BE CONSIDERED FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION, FROM THE ROBINS REPORT.

## TECH HUB EXPANSION BATTLE CONTINUES

**PROTECTIONS FOR UNIV. PL., B'WAY, 3RD & 4TH AVENUES STILL NEEDED**

Village Preservation has been keeping up the pressure following the approval of the upzoning for the 23-story 'Tech Hub' on 14th Street and 4th Avenue by the Mayor and the City Council, with virtually none of the protections for the surrounding Greenwich Village and East Village neighborhoods local Councilmember Carlina Rivera promised as a condition of her support.



WE HAVE CONTINUED OUR PROTESTS OF THE EXPANSION OF 'SILICON ALLEY' IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

We continue to demand expanded landmark protections for this area. We have identified nearly two hundred buildings here which warrant consideration for historic district protection; so far the City has only agreed to consider seven (about 3.5%), as per the deal struck by Councilmember Rivera. To push for more action, we released a report by noted architectural historian (and former Landmarks Preservation Commission Director) Tony Robins about the unique architectural and cultural history of the area, and calling for its

preservation. The report highlighted the central role these blocks played in the formation of the 'New York School' of painters in the mid-20th century, who shifted the center of the art world from Paris to New York, and the extraordinary architecture of the area, which includes elaborately detailed loft buildings, grand century-old hotels, robust former printing houses, handsome pre-war apartment buildings, and charming rowhouses.

We have also continued to shed light upon the lack of transparency and favoritism behind the tech hub deal, which increases development pressure upon our neighborhoods. Through Freedom of Information requests we revealed that the original tech hub plan did not require the damaging upzoning, which was only added later to increase the profits for the developer; that the City had no written records of how or why this bid was chosen over other, smaller and less impactful plans for the site; that the developer was a major contributor to the Mayor's non-profit 'Campaign for One New York,' and that under the terms of the sweetheart deal the developer will actually be paying

the City less for the site than the prior leaseholder, who was only allowed to erect a 2-story electronics appliance store on the site.

We were highly critical of the failure of the deal between Councilmember Rivera and the Mayor to include virtually any of the protections the Councilmember promised to condition her support upon when running for and after taking office. What we got instead was a commitment to consider a "fraction of a fraction" of the measures we called for – landmark designation for 3.5% of the area, a very weak limitation on hotel development for another fraction of the area, and some vague tenant protections. As we go to press, a year after the City approved this plan, none of even these incredibly modest protections which were supposed to be part of this deal have been implemented or even formally proposed in most cases. Meanwhile, the historic former St. Denis Hotel at Broadway and 11th Street has been demolished, to be replaced by a large glass tech-related office tower.

*Find out more at [gvshp.org/savemyneighborhood](http://gvshp.org/savemyneighborhood).*

# FINALLY — PROGRESS ON LGBT LANDMARKS

As our neighborhoods are home to some of the most important LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender) historic sites in the world, we have long led the charge for their recognition and protection. In 1999 we successfully co-nominated the Stonewall Inn for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places – the first time any site was ever so recognized for LGBT history by state or federal government.

In 2014, we began a campaign to secure city landmark designation for several important LGBT historic sites (city landmark designation, unlike state or federal listing, actually prevents demolition or unsympathetic changes). Among the sites was the Stonewall Inn, which was landmarked a year later by the City in 2015, becoming the first New York City landmark designation based primarily upon LGBT history.

But we included three other critical local sites in our campaign: the LGBT Community Services Center at 208 W. 13th Street (1869/1899), one of the first such centers in the world, and the site of



THE LGBT COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER (L.) AND THE FORMER GAA FIREHOUSE (R.).

the founding or early meetings of several key early LGBT organizations; the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse at 99 Wooster Street (1881), the home of an influential post-Stonewall political organization which was headquartered here in the early 1970s until a 1974 firebombing drove them out; and Julius' Bar at 159 West 10th Street (1826), one of the oldest bars in New York City and the site of one of the first acts of planned civil disobedience for LGBT rights in 1966. For years the city refused to consider any of these, in spite of their undeniable significance.

With the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots this year marking a half century of progress on

LGBT rights, we re-dedicated the campaign, raising it directly with the new Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) Chair and working closely with supporters like City Council Speaker Corey Johnson. We're proud to report that in May the LPC announced for the first time that they would consider both the LGBT Center and the GAA Firehouse for landmark designation, and we are optimistic they will be approved soon.

See [gvshp.org/lgbtlandmarks](http://gvshp.org/lgbtlandmarks) for more info and updates.



## WHITE HORSE TAVERN ENDANGERED

Earlier this year, the historic White Horse Tavern and the building in which it is located at 567 Hudson Street (11th Street) was sold to notorious landlord Steve Croman, with a new Midtown operator taking over the reins of the tavern. While

the building is located in the Greenwich Village Historic District and therefore its exterior is protected, there is nothing to stop the new owners and operators from changing or destroying the historic interior entirely. The storied White Horse, opened ca. 1880, is world-renowned as a gathering spot for luminaries as diverse as Dylan Thomas, James Baldwin, Jack Kerouac, and Jane Jacobs, among many others.

In response, Village Preservation submitted documentation and research to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission about the White Horse's history, urging that the interior be landmarked as soon as possible. The beloved watering hole's interior is largely intact to its period of historic significance, preserving the environment in which these storied figures drank, argued, and held court in the mid-20th century.

Though the new operators of the tavern have stated they intend to keep the historic space intact, they closed the tavern for a while, papering over the windows to obscure public view of the space

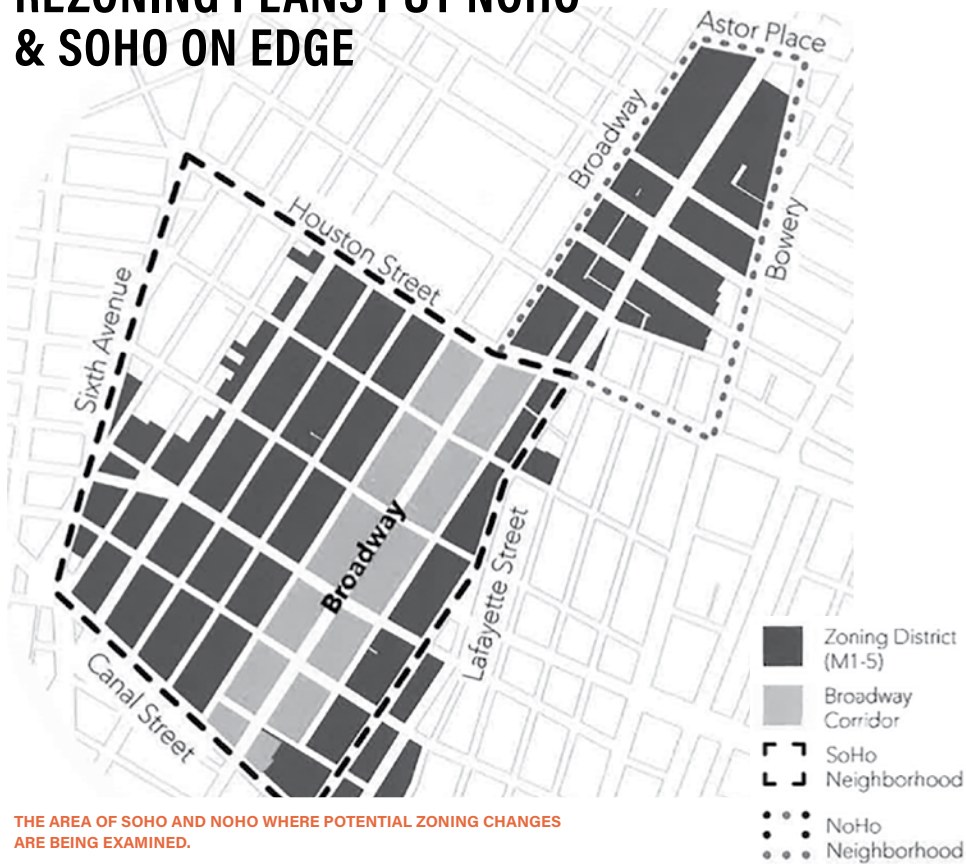


JANE JACOBS AT THE WHITE HORSE, 1961.

and removing furnishings. Village Preservation joined local elected officials for a press conference calling for landmark designation of the space to ensure its future. As we go to press the LPC has not yet responded to the request.

More info and updates at [gvshp.org/whitehorse](http://gvshp.org/whitehorse).

# REZONING PLANS PUT NOHO & SOHO ON EDGE



THE AREA OF SOHO AND NOHO WHERE POTENTIAL ZONING CHANGES ARE BEING EXAMINED.

Village Preservation has joined with fellow downtown and preservation groups to respond to plans by the Mayor, Borough President Gale Brewer, and Councilmember Margaret Chin, to consider zoning changes for the NoHo and SoHo neighborhoods. None of the three sponsoring entities have said what sort of changes they would like to see implemented for the neighborhoods, but real estate interests and NYU, both of which are represented on the Advisory Board for the process (Village Preservation is not) have expressed a strong interest in expanding development opportunities and university presence in the area.

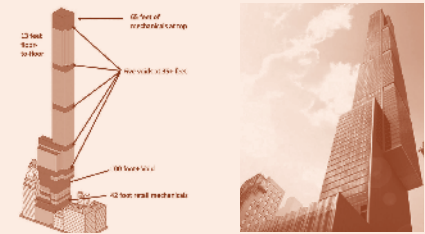
In response, Village Preservation and our allies formed the Save SoHo-NoHo Coalition, united around several guiding principles to protect these neighborhoods: 1) Preserve the existing rights and protections for residents, especially artists; 2) maintain the existing allowable size and density of new development; 3) uphold existing limits on the

maximum allowable size of retail; 4) keep public review for developments or uses not currently allowed; 5) limit types of university uses to those allowable under existing zoning; and 6) keep the creative character of SoHo and NoHo.

While SoHo and NoHo have undergone tremendous change — some of it good, some of it not so good — these neighborhoods are some of the most richly historic in the city, with unique identities. We know that certain interests would love to see ever-larger development and retail establishments in the area, and this is not what we think these neighborhoods need. We expect the city to release some preliminary recommendations this summer about the future of SoHo and NoHo. We and our allies will be there, and continue to mobilize the public to ensure the things we treasure about these neighborhoods are protected.

More at [gvshp.org/nohosoho](http://gvshp.org/nohosoho).

# CITY AIDS SUPERTALL TOWERS WITH ZONING LOOPHOLE



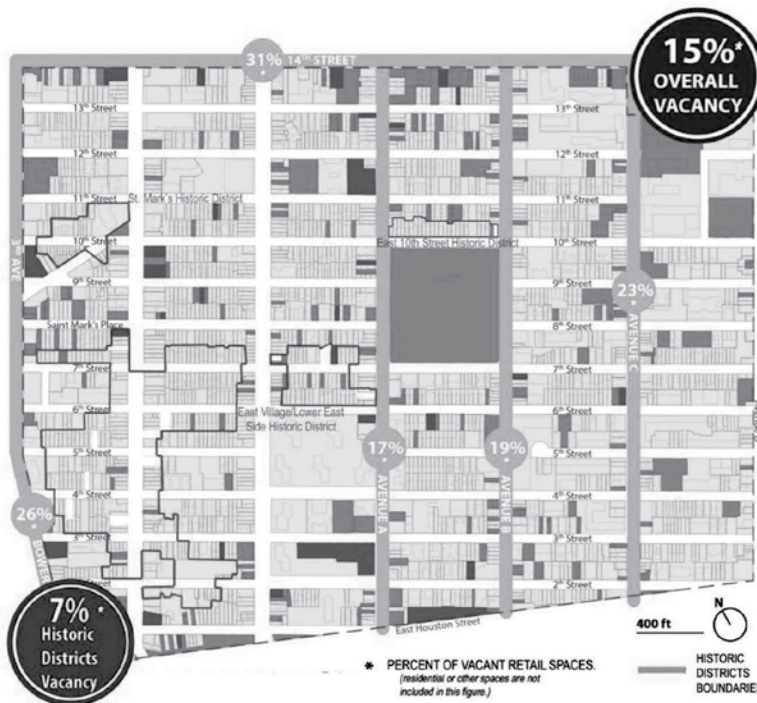
AN ILLUSTRATION OF HOW ONE "SUPERTALL" ON 57TH STREET GOT SO TALL WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF PHONY AND UNNECESSARY 'MECHANICAL VOIDS'.

The explosion of supertall towers in residential neighborhoods in New York has been abetted by a zoning loophole concocted by developers and allowed by the city. Spaces that house mechanical equipment for the operation of buildings are exempt from zoning restrictions. So developers have been labelling enormous empty voids in their buildings, sometimes hundreds of feet tall, as "mechanical space" to lift the height of their buildings, commanding a higher premium for high floors, without zoning restrictions applying. The City has been all too willing to let developers get away with this manipulation of the system.

In response to pressure from advocates and elected officials, the City finally put forward a plan to supposedly address the problem. However, their plan itself is full of loopholes, and explicitly writes the existing loopholes into the rules. We urged the City to instead consider measures such as appropriate height limits for new developments in residential areas; limits on the percentage of buildings that can count as exempt "mechanical space;" and clearer definitions of mechanical space that would not allow inflated "voids." Instead, the City promulgated new rules that make the bogus voids explicitly allowable, as long as they are scattered throughout the building as opposed to in single, large blocks, though there are exceptions to even this modest restriction.

We are working with members of the City Council and the State Legislature to try to address this issue more comprehensively than the Mayor has been willing to. This is a more than theoretical issue for our neighborhoods — some areas like Fifth Avenue and Union Square South allow the kinds of supertall towers these measures are needed to prevent.

See more at [gvshp.org/supertall](http://gvshp.org/supertall).



## EAST VILLAGE STOREFRONT VACANCIES

GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL VACANCY DATA WAS COLLECTED THROUGH A STREET SURVEY IN THE SUMMER/FALL OF 2018. SURVEYORS COUNTED THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STOREFRONTS AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VACANT STOREFRONTS. THE VACANCY PERCENTAGE WAS CALCULATED AS THE NUMBER OF VACANT STOREFRONTS IN A GIVEN AREA DIVIDED BY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STOREFRONTS IN THAT AREA.

DATA COLLECTION: EAST VILLAGE COMMUNITY COALITION MAP: COOPER SQUARE COMMITTEE HISTORIC DISTRICTS SURVEY: VILLAGE PRESERVATION, MARCH 2019

**LEGEND**

- STUDY BOUNDARY
- PARCEL WITH ONE STREET LEVEL RETAIL VACANCY
- PARCEL WITH TWO OR MORE STREET LEVEL RETAIL VACANCIES
- CORRIDOR HAS ABOVE AVERAGE VACANCY

<b>East Village/Lower East Side Historic District:</b> 230 Retail Spaces, 16 Vacant <b>Vacancy Rate: 7%</b>	<b>East 10th Street Historic District:</b> 12 Retail Spaces, 1 Vacant <b>Vacancy Rate: 8%</b>	<b>St. Mark's Historic District:</b> 0 Retail Spaces <b>Vacancy Rate: N/A</b>	<b>All three historic districts:</b> 242 Retail Spaces, 17 Vacant <b>Vacancy Rate 7%</b>
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## STUDY: RETAIL THRIVES IN LANDMARKED AREAS

Earlier this year Village Preservation released the results of a study we conducted with the Cooper Square Committee and the East Village Community Coalition analyzing retail vacancies in the East Village. It found a retail vacancy rate of 15% in the neighborhood overall, with some streets like 14th Street having a rate as high as 31%, and the Bowery/3rd Avenue as high as 26%.

But a further analysis performed by Village Preservation found something remarkable: landmarked sections of the neighborhood had consistently and substantially lower retail vacancy rates than non-landmarked sections. In fact, the retail vacancy rate in landmarked parts of the East Village were just a modest 7%. And while landmarked areas are found throughout the neighborhood – from just east of 3rd Avenue to Avenue B, and from 11th Street to 1st Street – storefronts located within landmarked districts had a markedly lower level of retail vacancies than

those in directly adjacent and nearby blocks. This finding is critical because last year the Real Estate Board of NY put out a report falsely claiming that landmarking led to retail vacancies. Yet our first-of-its-kind apples-to-apples comparison of retail vacancy rates within a single neighborhood, comparing landmarked and non-landmarked areas, found just the opposite. *See more at [gvshp.org/retailstudy](http://gvshp.org/retailstudy).*

Meanwhile, Village Preservation continues to advocate for other measures to help protect local small businesses. We are helping to lead a campaign to allow communities to limit the size and location of chain stores through zoning, and for various legislative actions that would penalize empty storefronts and make it easier for small businesses to remain in place as long as they are able to pay reasonable rents for their spaces.

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

## EAST VILLAGE IN CROSSHAIRS OF NOTORIOUS LOBBYIST



**PROPOSED OFFICE TOWER AT ST. MARKS PLACE AND 3RD AVENUE.**

Lobbying firm Capalino+Company gained notoriety for their prolific fundraising for Mayor de Blasio while successfully lobbying to overturn a restrictive deed allowing Rivington House, a facility for seniors with HIV/AIDS, to become luxury condos. We've taken on several other Capalino projects in the area, which the City has typically supported or, at best, turned a blind eye towards.

Capalino was the lobbyist behind the Tech Hub on 14th Street, and the new Moxy Hotel rising on 11th Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues, which required the demolition of five 19th century Beaux Arts walk-ups which the City had previously found "landmark eligible." The City then refused to landmark them when the hotel plans materialized.

Capalino has also lobbied for the developer who owns the landmarked former P.S. 64/Charas-El Bohio Community Center at 605 E. 9th Street. That developer has consistently sought to destroy or demolish the building, insert uses which violate the zoning or restrictive deeds, and left the building in disrepair and exposed to the elements. Dangerous conditions led to evacuations of nearby buildings earlier this year, after which the City finally initiated landmarks violations against the owner, which we've long sought.

Now the lobbyist is seeking approval of an air rights transfer that would make a planned 'boutique office' tower at St. Mark's Place and 3rd Avenue 20% larger than zoning allows. We are fighting the transfer, which is part of the ever-expanding 'Silicon Alley' presence in the neighborhood. Community Board #3 opposed the application, but Councilmember Carlina Rivera, who must ultimately approve it, has not yet taken a position.

*See more at [gvshp.org/stmarkstower](http://gvshp.org/stmarkstower).*

# IN BRIEF

## EAST VILLAGE

### 'BUILDING BLOCKS' EXPANDS

Earlier this year, we released a fantastic online tool over ten years in the making. 'East Village Building Blocks' contains images, the date of construction, the architect, original use, and major alterations to every one of over 2,000 buildings in the East Village. It includes original records showing the source of information, and additional histories, images, and stories connected to each building. It's part of our ongoing campaign to highlight the East Village's incredibly rich history and architecture, and to advocate for its preservation.



Since its launch, we have added a series of "tours" to the site allowing you to explore the East Village based on a variety of themes. Current tours include African American History, Music Venues, Punk Rock, Jewish Rialto, the Dry Dock District, Astor Family Tenements, Kleindeutschland, and Individual Landmarks. You can also explore on your own based upon year of construction, architect, building type or style, block, or many other characteristics. And you can leave your own pictures, remembrances, or other information about any building.

Explore at [gvshp.org/buildingblocks](http://gvshp.org/buildingblocks).



## ALEX HALEY

### HISTORIC PLAQUE

In May we unveiled our historic plaque marking the former home and studio of writer Alex Haley at 92 Grove Street. Located within the Greenwich Village Historic District, it was part of our 50th anniversary celebration, and a tribute to one of the late 20th century's most influential writers. Haley lived and wrote here in the mid-1960s while he conducted more than fifty interviews with Malcolm X, which became the basis for *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Haley went on to write *Roots*, for which he won a Pulitzer Prize.

This is our fourteenth historic plaque, which have marked the homes of Frank O'Hara, Lorraine Hansberry, and James Baldwin, Jean-Michel Basquiat's former studio, the first hospital run by and for women, and the former homes of the Fillmore East, the San Remo Café, and Martha Graham's Dance Studio, among other locations.

See more at [gvshp.org/plaque](http://gvshp.org/plaque).

## VILLAGE AWARDEES

### MAKE US PROUD

This year we honored an amazing group at our annual Village Awards: The Christopher Park Alliance, for caring for and improving a vital historic park at the center of Stonewall50 celebrations; The Source Unltd Print & Copy Shop, for almost 40 years of supporting fellow businesses and residents in the East Village; The Brant Foundation and Gluckman Tang Architects, for renovating the former Con Ed substation at 421 E. 6th Street and turning it into a magnificent art showcase open to the public; Tea & Sympathy, for almost 30 years serving as New York's go-to spot for a taste of England; The Bitter End, one of the world's premiere music venues since 1961; Hettie Jones, the great poet, teacher, writer, and activist; and the Estate of Fred W. McDarrah, for sharing the work of the incredible photographic chronicler of late 20th century downtown life, and using that legacy to support worthy causes including historic preservation and civil rights.



ONE OF MANY AMAZING FRED MCDARRAH IMAGES, THIS ONE OF JANE JACOBS PROTESTING IN FRONT OF P.S. 41 IN 1963. COURTESY OF THE ESTATE OF FRED W. MCDARRAH.

Over the past 28 years, we have honored more than 270 great local businesses, community groups, institutions, restorations, and individuals for their work to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo.

See more at [gvshp.org/awards](http://gvshp.org/awards).

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

ANDREW BERMAN



This year has been a momentous one for us. As you may have noticed, we've adopted a new, simpler moniker—Village Preservation—and a new look. We're still very much the same organization, striving to document, celebrate, and preserve the special architectural and cultural character of Greenwich Village, the East Village,

and NoHo. But as our mission and geographic scope has broadened, we felt our name should reflect that. So far, the feedback has been tremendously positive.

We also started the year celebrating the 50th anniversary of one of city's oldest, smallest, and most unique historic districts – the St. Mark's Historic District in the East Village, where our offices are located. In the spring and throughout the year, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the city's largest and most diverse historic district, the Greenwich Village Historic District, thanking the activists who made that possible and looking forward to the next fifty years of preservation in this area. And this summer we will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, three nights of disturbances in our neighborhood which began a revolution in our culture.

Each of these exemplifies the character of our neighborhoods to which we dedicate ourselves. Charming and unique. Sprawling and all-embracing. Revolutionary and impactful. Carving new paths towards the future, while preserving the best of the past. Now more than ever, we must spotlight the value and importance of our neighborhoods, and why we all have a stake in preserving them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Village Preservation gratefully acknowledges grants in support of our work from Frank Cronin, Lynne Waxman Foundation, Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, The Achelis & Bodman Foundation, The Dalio 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.

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

## VISIT OUR 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).

## 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).

## EXPLORE LANDMARKS OF CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY

in our neighborhoods at [gvshp.org/civilrightsmap](http://gvshp.org/civilrightsmap).

## OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION 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. Learn more at [gvshp.org/kidsed](http://gvshp.org/kidsed).

## SEE 2,000 HISTORIC IMAGES

of our neighborhood in our Historic Image Archive: [gvshp.org/archive](http://gvshp.org/archive).

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

*We also gratefully acknowledge in-kind support from Carole Teller, Doyle Partners, the Estate of Fred W. McDarragh, First Republic Bank, Gourmet Garage, Murray's Cheese, Rory Callahan, The New School, Tom Brynes of T. Edward Wines and Spirits, St. John's in the Village, Salmagundi Club, Veselka, Westside Market, and The Urban Zen Center.*

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# VILLAGE PRESERVATION

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