



TESTIMONY REGARDING PROPOSED TRANSFER OF AIR RIGHTS  
for 3 St. Mark's Place C 200077 ZSM  
Special permit pursuant to Section 74- 79 of the Zoning Resolution  
March 4, 2020

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I am testifying today on behalf of Village Preservation, the largest membership organization in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. We strongly oppose the transfer of air rights from the landmarked 4 St. Mark's Place to the proposed office tower at 3 St. Mark's Place. The potential benefits to this individual landmark and the neighborhood are simply not worth the trade-off of the air rights transfer. Most of the restoration of 4 St. Mark's Place, which was approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 2016, has already been executed, including the roof dormers, the installation of the cornice, repointing and repair of the brick, replacement of the windows and doors, replacement of the transom light at the entry, installation of new metal railings, and repair of the stoop. The applicant is simply seeking to get after-the-fact credit and financial benefit for work already done and paid for, and extra square footage for additional work which is not needed and certainly does not justify the air rights transfer.

We have serious concerns about the planned office tower on St. Mark's Place, at what is considered the gateway to the East Village. We believe that an even larger office tower at this very significant and prominent location in the East Village would have a detrimental impact upon the character of the neighborhood. It should be noted that we do not object to the height and setback waivers being sought.

While the applicant has added some additional restorations to 4 St. Mark's Place beyond what was approved in 2016, part of the beauty and significance of the landmarked house, which our organization proposed for landmark designation in 2002, are the changes it has undergone over time. To simply erase all those changes as a means to gain approval for the air rights transfer is unnecessary and wrong.

We are huge supporters of historic preservation. The nearby Merchants House Museum is a perfectly preserved slice of New York from 200 years ago. That is not what this house, which is not open to the public, should be or needs to be. Erasing almost 200 years of history to create a facsimile of what the building looked like when built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century is neither desirable nor would it justify the air rights transfer, whose real purpose is to simply increase the size of the office tower. The Special Permit is not necessary to fund needed or even necessarily desirable restoration work.

This neighborhood is undergoing what we and many others see as detrimental changes to its character, as the City seeks to extend Midtown South and Silicon Alley to this area. We continue to petition for landmark and zoning protections for the area to prevent that. However, we do not want to accelerate that process by allowing this tech office tower to increase in size by 20% beyond what the existing zoning would normally allow. We call upon the Commission to reject this application.