



The ANTIHEMION

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Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation



Fall 2005

Far West Village Victory!

Preservation History Made on the Greenwich Village Waterfront

an area the Greenwich Village community had sought to save since the 1960s was a tremendous success. The battle is not entirely over: we need to ensure that the City implements all the measures it has promised, and there are still some critical gaps in the plan. However, an important chapter in this 40-year fight has come to a successful close.

Downzoning of Historic Proportions

On October 11, the City passed a comprehensive rezoning of the blocks between Horatio and Morton Streets along the Greenwich Village waterfront, which, for the first time since 1961, significantly reduced the height and bulk of allowable development throughout much of the area. One of the few downzonings ever enacted in Manhattan, this rezoning resulted from a plan submitted by GVSHP and the Greenwich Village Community Task Force in 2004 and a year-and-a-half campaign supported by thousands of our members and allies. While the plan ultimately approved by

One of many GVSHP rallies to save the Far West Village, with executive director Andrew Berman, left, addressing the crowd

Preserving the Far West Village and the Greenwich Village waterfront, both threatened by imminent development, became the Society's top preservation priority in 2004. We focused on the area between Horatio and Morton Streets because it lacked landmark protections and, unlike the areas to the north and the south, the underlying zoning allowed massive high-rises. To preserve the area's historic buildings and to protect its scale, we embarked on a two-track approach: pushing both for landmark protections and for a downzoning. With the support of thousands of our members and supporters, we are proud to say that this effort to preserve



the City was weaker than GVSHP's and carved out two significant development sites, it nevertheless went quite far in reducing or eliminating the threat of more high-rise development in the area.

Following the plan submitted by GVSHP, the rezoning imposed for the first time absolute height limits for new development in the area, eliminating what may be the greatest overdevelopment threat facing the Far West Village: the nearly unlimited ability of developers under the old zoning to transfer air rights to adjoining lots and build even bigger, taller structures than would normally be allowed. Many of the high-rises built in the area over the last twenty years utilized the transfer of air rights. The plan also significantly reduced the allowable bulk, or size, of new development on many sites in the area by as much as a half.



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More Federal Houses Protected

The ongoing campaign for landmark protections for thirteen Federal-era (1790-1835) houses by GVSHP and the New York Landmarks Conservancy advanced this summer when the fifth house received landmark designation by the City: 67 Greenwich Street. It now joins 127, 129, and 131 MacDougal Street (designated in the summer of 2004) and 4 St. Mark's Place (fall 2004), while 94, 94 1/2, 96, 486, and 488 Greenwich Street; 2 Oliver Street; 57 Sullivan Street; and 7 Leroy Street still await action. To help, please go to www.gvshp.org/federalrowhousesletter.htm; for more information, please go to www.gvshp.org/federalrowhouses.htm.

Legislative Update

GVSHP supported several key pieces of legislation introduced to help preserve neighborhoods. These include Intro. 170, which would allow the City Council to review decisions of the Board of Standards and Appeals, and Intro. 679, which would place a moratorium on new building permits in areas proposed for rezonings. Both bills were introduced by Councilmember Tony Avella. Intro. 705, introduced by Councilmember Bill Perkins, would require the Landmarks Preservation Commission to hold a hearing on landmark designation of any building or district requested by the Council or any site determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. All bills are awaiting a vote by the full Council.

East Village Rezoning

GVSHP has embarked on an effort with Community Board 3, the East Village Community Coalition, and local elected officials to rezone the East Village. Increasingly, the neighborhood faces the threat of out-of-scale high-rise development, stemming in large part from two quirks in the zoning law: (1) a bonus that allows "community facility" developments like dorms to add extra bulk and (2) a lack of height caps, allowing the accumulation of nearly unlimited air rights. GVSHP has met with the City to discuss the application of "contextual zoning" to the area, as we did in the Far West Village. Such a change would impose appropriate height caps and abolish the community-facilities bonus. So far the City has been encouraging in its responses, and we hope to work together with all the parties to see these reforms undertaken here soon.

Thanks to the Society's Save Gansevoort Market project, new markers now line the historic district

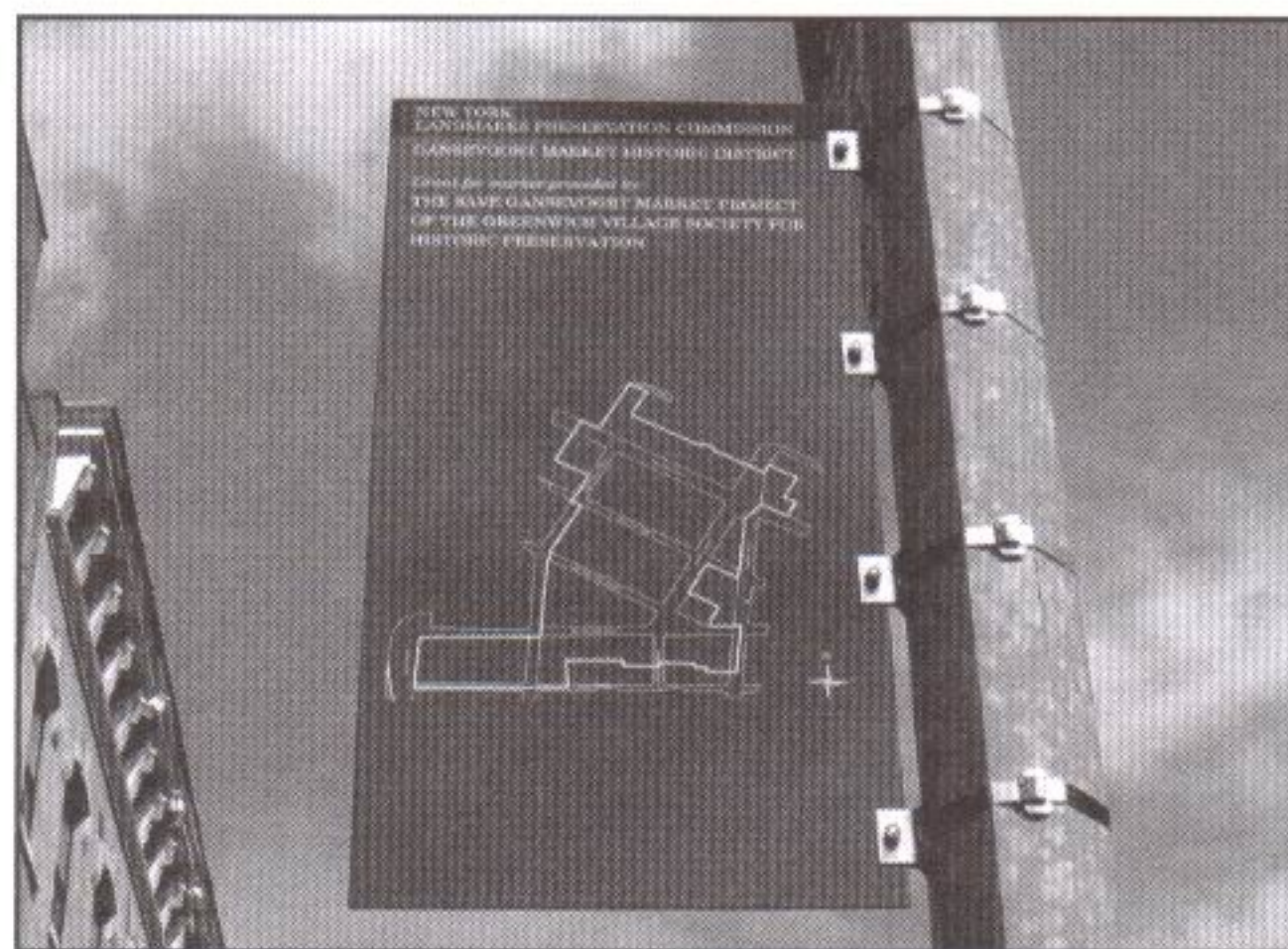
Not Your Average Garage

As part of our ongoing Historic South Village preservation project, GVSHP brings to the City's attention any significant historic buildings in this area that are threatened, and asks for their help in saving them. Just such a case is the Tunnel Garage at Thompson and Broome Streets, at the southern edge of our Historic South Village study area.

Built in 1922, this late Arts and Crafts/early Deco-Modern structure was one of the first auto garages in New York, and is distinguished by bold brickwork, colorful terra cotta ornament and lettering, industrial casement windows, and a dramatic rounded corner topped by an emblem bearing an image of a Model-T Ford. Threatened by demolition, the building is scheduled to be replaced by a nine-story apartment house that would require a variance from the Board of Standards and Appeals. At GVSHP's request, the building has been determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. To help or to get more information, go to www.gvshp.org/svtg.htm.

Historic Street Signs in Gansevoort Market

As part of our ongoing preservation efforts in the Meatpacking District, this past summer GVSHP helped secure production and placement of the distinctive brown historic district street signs and markers that identify the area as part of a designated landmark district. Our Save Gansevoort Market (SGM) project paid for most of the signs, and SGM co-founders Jo Hamilton and Florent Morellet were on hand for the historic unveiling.



Far West Village continued from front page

Moreover, the downzoning was so great in some areas that it actually made the size of allowable new development about the same or smaller than the existing structures, thus making new development on those sites impractical or unlikely.

Landmark Plans Take Giant Leap Forward

In 2004, GVSHP submitted a plan to the City for a landmark district for the Far West Village that would have preserved all the unprotected historic buildings between Horatio and Barrow Streets, many of which were severely threatened. The plan was widely supported by fellow West Village community groups; local residents and property owners; and city, state, and national preservation organizations. The Society led dozens of rallies and marches as well as letter, postcard, and e-mail campaigns in which thousands participated.

In response to this campaign, on June 9 the City released its own landmarking proposal for the area, covering about 65 percent of our plan. The City's landmark proposal included a new historic district around Weehawken Street, an extension of the Greenwich Village Historic District, six individual landmark designations, the street bed of Charles Lane, and the entire Westbeth complex. The expansion of the Greenwich Village Historic District would be the first since the district was enacted in 1969, and the plan included the first-ever expansion of historic district protections in the Far West Village!

The plan covered many of the most precious and vulnerable buildings in the neighborhood, and we were particularly grateful that the City heeded our call to break new ground by including not just historic buildings but a historic street like Charles Lane. Combined with the rezoning plan, about 90 percent of the buildings that we targeted in the Far West Village were proposed to be landmarked, downzoned, or both.

A few key sites, however, were not proposed by the City for either downzoning or landmarking, or were left otherwise vulnerable. Additionally, the City announced that they would not enact the majority of the proposed landmark designations until the spring of 2006, leaving an unusually long period of time during which these buildings could still be demolished and replaced with inappropriate new development. Therefore, GVSHP began a new campaign to urge the City to speed up the timetable for these designations, and to expand their plan to include several vulnerable buildings they left out. Our efforts paid off. In late September, the City announced they would move more quickly to schedule hearings on the proposed historic district and district extension. They also added three buildings left out of their original proposal which GVSHP had specifically targeted for inclusion: 177 Christopher, 139 Charles, and 143 Charles/687

Moreover, the downzoning was so great in some areas that it actually made the size of allowable new



Washington Streets. On October 18, the City's Landmarks Preservation Commission held its hearing on the two Far West Village district proposals, and a huge turnout sent a loud and clear message that we wanted the City to designate as soon as possible.

But the story is still not over: While the hearing was a success, the landmark designations do not take effect until the Commission votes to approve, and a vote has not yet been scheduled. The six individual buildings the Commission has proposed for landmarking along with Charles Lane and the Westbeth complex have not yet been scheduled for a hearing. And we still need to push the Commission to consider designation of endangered and unprotected buildings like the Superior Inks factory. To help, please go to www.gvshp.org/FWVletters.htm.

Carve-Outs and Soft Sites Still Present Problems

Although the campaign to preserve the Far West Village has been an overwhelming success, there are still critical historic buildings that the City has refused to protect and sites where the City is allowing inappropriately scaled development. Perhaps the two most notorious examples are the Superior Inks factory, at Bethune and West Streets, and the Whitehall Storage facility,

on Charles and West 10th between Washington and West Streets. To allow and encourage large-scale development, both sites were carved out of the City's downzoning plan, and though included in the Society's landmarking proposal, neither building was included in the City's. GVSHP protested vociferously when the two sites were not downzoned in the City's rezoning plan, but the City refused to act to add them to the plan. However, the story does not end there.

In response to the storm of protest against their original plans for the Superior Inks site, Related Companies, the developer, has changed its design from a 270-foot-tall curvilinear reflective glass tower to one that's 195 feet tall, less bulky, clad in masonry, and rectilinear. While still too tall and big, it's a vast improvement over the earlier plan and a

In jeopardy: the Superior Inks Building, which the Related Co. intends to replace with a 195-foot apartment complex; 360 West 11th Street, atop which Julian Schnabel hopes to build a 110-foot condominium; 163 Charles Street, where a three-story 1832 house was demolished to make way for a sliver tower; and 166 Perry Street, where a developer wants to add two more stories



partial victory for the community's efforts. Though the City is allowing Related to undertake a large residential development on the site, the developer still needs to get a variance from the Board of Standards and Appeals to build the taller, narrower tower it wants, and is seeking extra bulk to make the development even larger than allowed. At the September hearing on Related's variance request, GVSHP and scores of Villagers turned out to tell the BSA not to grant Related any extra bulk and to reduce the size and height of its proposed tower. While the Board has not yet ruled, their statements at the hearing indicated that they were very sympathetic to our call, and we are hopeful that they will rule favorably. To push for a favorable ruling from the BSA, go to www.gvshp.org/SupInkBSAlet.htm. Congressman Nadler, State Senator Duane, Councilmember Quinn, and Assemblymember Glick have all made similar calls to the BSA.

At the same time, GVSHP continues to push the City to add the

Superior Inks factory to their landmarks proposal; to do the same, go to www.gvshp.org/FWVletters.htm. State Senator Duane and Assemblymember Glick have also joined in this call.

At the Whitehall Storage site, the City similarly refused to downzone the parcel in spite of our protests, leaving it with the highest density zoning of any mid-block site in the Village. Under the City's zoning for the site, the developer could have easily built a tower more than 30 stories tall; however, developer Steven Witkoff pledged to GVSHP and others that he would not build quite as high or as large as the zoning would allow him. As we go to press, he has reduced the height from 195 to 175 feet, and we continue to push for further reductions and concessions. Throughout the rezoning

process, GVSHP pointed out the gross disparity in allowing this massive development while downzoning and/or landmarking virtually everything around it.

Stopping Developers from Getting Around New Zoning Regulations

Several developers have tried to get around our hard-won zoning restrictions in the Far West Village with new high-rise developments, and the Society has been at the ready to stop them.

GVSHP worked diligently to get the Far West Village rezoning passed as quickly as possible to prevent developers from getting their projects in the ground before the rezoning took effect and, therefore, being grandfathered in under the old, less restrictive zoning. At 393 West 12th Street, one developer sought to do this for a new high-rise development, but because we got the rezoning plan approved in near

new zoning. At 163 Charles Street, the City issued a stop-work order for a planned 100-foot-tall "sliver tower" intended to replace an 1831 rowhouse we fought to save. At 166 Perry Street (the Perry Street garage), faced with the rapidly approaching rezoning, the developer of the first two Richard Meier towers opted not to try to tear down the existing building and build a fourth Meier tower, but rather to add two stories to the existing building. However, he only began the work shortly before the rezoning took effect, and when the City inspected his site at our request, they also issued a stop-work order, stopping any further work on the addition which did not conform with the new zoning. As we go to press, both projects remain halted.

At 360 West 11th Street, painter-turned-developer Julian Schnabel began construction on a 110-foot-tall addition to his turn-of-the-century stable three weeks before the rezoning took effect. According to neighbors, he performed illegal after-hours work



record time, he was stopped cold. Another developer, at 383-391 West 12th Street, knowing that he did not have enough time to beat the clock, sought our support to loosen the restrictions of the rezoning for his site, but we rejected the request. Councilmember Quinn, the City Planning Commission, and Council Zoning Subcommittee Chair Tony Avella were extremely helpful in working with us to accelerate the rezoning process in order to thwart these oversized developments.

But the battles did not end there. Several developments were in motion when the rezoning passed, and GVSHP got the City to inspect the sites as soon as the new zoning took effect to ensure that any projects that did not have their foundations completed would, as required by law, be stopped and forced to conform to the

throughout the period to try to beat the clock. After our requested inspection, the City initially ruled that Schnabel was far enough along to be grandfathered in. GVSHP, Councilmember Quinn, State Senator Duane, Assemblymember Glick, and neighbors immediately objected, and evidence was submitted of Schnabel's illegal work. On November 6 the Society organized a protest in front of the site. Five days later the City reconsidered and issued a stop-work order here as well.

It seems that a final determination for these three sites may end up at the Board of Standards and Appeals. But as a result of our efforts, at least for now, no other developments will be allowed that flout the new, more restrictive zoning. GVSHP will continue to defend the integrity of the plan we fought so hard to enact.

From the Director

GVSHP's 25th anniversary year has certainly

turned out to be a momentous one for the organization. Culminating a struggle begun by Jane Jacobs in the 1960s, GVSHP successfully led a campaign to secure zoning and landmark protections for the Greenwich Village waterfront, a goal of the organization since its inception. After years of mounting losses, we now, finally, have some very significant bulwarks against uncontrolled development in the area. I know I speak for many when I say I thought this day might never arrive.

But fortunately it has, and none of this would have been possible without the support and participation of our members, who responded in overwhelming numbers to virtually every call to write letters, sign postcards, march at rallies, and testify at hearings. As our membership numbers and support have grown, GVSHP has been able to take on more of these campaigns and be a more effective preservation leader for our entire neighborhood. In the past three years, GVSHP has not only successfully led the Far West Village preservation effort but also secured designation of the Gansevoort Market Historic District, twice stopped a proposed 500-foot-tall tower in the Meatpacking District, forced the City to overturn a ruling that would have allowed similar towers in Noho and the Far West Village, and won landmark status for

five precious unprotected Federal-era rowhouses near Washington Square, in the East Village, and downtown. Of course, the work is far from over. Even along the Greenwich Village waterfront, a number of critical sites the City did not agree to preserve still require our attention and advocacy. This year we've made some further progress in our South and East Village preservation efforts, and in our fight against community-facility abuses, but there is still more to be done. And as we seek to expand our Children's Education program and our Greenwich Village Historic Archives — to share our wonderful history with students, scholars, and the public — we face new challenges of planning and funding for the future.

It's clear that our ability to affect change and preserve our neighborhood is directly related to the support and participation we receive from our friends and members. As GVSHP completes its first 25 years and looks toward the future, I hope you'll consider increasing your membership support, introducing us to a friend, becoming a member if you aren't already, or inviting us to speak to your block, tenant, co-op, condo, or civic association. Together, I'm confident that we can make the years ahead even more successful.



The Society

Our offices can be reached by phone at (212) 475-9585, by e-mail at gvshp@gvshp.org, and by postal mail at 232 East 11th Street, New York, New York 10003. The Society can be found on the web at www.gvshp.org.

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Wait a Minute, Mr. Postman

Society Fights Post Office Attempt to Skirt Federal Guidelines

historic properties without adhering to federal historic preservation guidelines. As a result, the federal agency responsible for oversight of the USPS's historic preservation responsibilities has undertaken a review of their practices and called for changes.

Earlier this year, GVSHP discovered that the USPS sold development rights from its Cooper Station, at Fourth Avenue and 11th Street, to a private developer who now intends to build a 26-story dorm for NYU on an adjacent site. The planned new development, completely out-of-scale with its mid-block surroundings, required the demolition of most of historic St. Ann's Church (see Spring 2005 Anthemion, at www.gvshp.org/documents/Newsletter3.pdf). Federal agencies like the Post Office are required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to conduct a review of any actions they undertake so that any "adverse effect upon historic resources" is identified and, if possible, mitigated. Such a review requires consultation with local preservation organizations and the State. The Post Office did none of this.

A further investigation by GVSHP found that in fact USPS had sold off development rights from at least three other post offices in Manhattan for neighboring development (on West 42nd, East 23rd, and Canal Streets), all without going through the required Section 106 review. GVSHP brought this to the attention of the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), which has oversight over federal agencies' compliance with these regulations. An ACHP investigation led to an admission of guilt by USPS, and a settlement, with input from GVSHP, is now being negotiated.

GVSHP has called for an investigation into the sale by the United States Postal Service (USPS) of its development rights throughout Manhattan. These sales have not only led to overdevelopment but have also had a detrimental effect on



The old P.S. 64, which has now been saved from a mega-dorm proposal

Victory Against "Trojan Dorms"

Safeguard Against Community Facility Abuse Upheld

(see www.gvshp.org/documents/Newsletter2_001.pdf). At 81 East 3rd Street, a developer built an oversized, 13-story "dorm" on a sidestreet of three to six story buildings, and then had no school to occupy the building. To skeptical-minded neighbors, it looked like a scheme to construct a residential building of about twice the legally allowable

size. GVSHP stood with local groups in opposing the development and pushing the City to prohibit occupancy of the building without a dorm use in place. As a result, the City passed new regulations requiring builders to have at least a long-term lease in place from a school before being allowed to build a supposed dorm.

This summer, a new threat arose. At the former P.S. 64 site, at 605 East 9th Street, developer Greg Singer applied for a permit to build a 19-story mega-dorm without having a school in place to occupy it. When the City refused to issue the permit because of the new rule, Singer filed a case to have the rule overturned. GVSHP, local advocates, and the East Village Community Coalition turned out

in force at the hearing against the developer's case, hammering home the broad ramifications of increased neighborhood overdevelopment and the abuse of community-facility regulations that would follow if the developer were successful in his arguments.

In a victory for preservation efforts, on October 18 the Board of Standards and Appeals upheld the City regulation. With this threat eliminated, GVSHP continues to meet with City officials to push for further reform of community-facility regulations, so that dorms and other similar facilities do not continue to get preferential treatment that encourages out-of-scale development. As it happens, the same day the City ruled against the mega-dorm scheme for the P.S. 64 site, they also announced that they would formally consider landmark status for the school, built in 1906 and an icon of early public school design — a goal long advocated by the local community, outgoing Councilmember Margarita Lopez, and incoming Councilmember Rosie Mendez.

As reported in the Spring 2005 Anthemion, GVSHP has fought attempts by developers to exploit the City's zoning bonus afforded to dorms and other "community facilities," which allows them to be built much larger than residential buildings

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