



Down to the Wire for the Far West Village

Will City Keep Promise to Act Before It's Too Late?

100-foot-tall apartment tower on a narrow lot. In January, GVSHP learned that artist Julian Schnabel was seeking to build a 110-foot-tall tower atop his three-story, turn-of-the-century stable at 360 West 11th Street. GVSHP reached out to Schnabel to urge him to alter his plans and respect the community's efforts to see this area landmarked and downzoned. We got no response; instead, he pursued expedited approval of his plans. GVSHP and other community groups held a protest in front of the site calling on Schnabel to reconsider his development, urging the City to postpone issuing the permits, and pushing the City to enact landmarking and downzoning measures. In spite of our protests, however, the City issued the permits, the legality of which GVSHP is currently challenging.

Now the stakes have become even higher. Related Companies, developers of the Time Warner Center at Columbus Circle, is seeking to build the largest development yet along the Greenwich Village waterfront — a 270-foot-tall behemoth on the site of the historic Superior Ink factory at West and Bethune Streets. Here the zoning prohibits such development, but Related is claiming "hardship" to seek a variance (or exemption) from the existing zoning to allow them to proceed. Public hearings for this variance are expected this summer, and GVSHP will be leading the opposition. Contact us if you're not already on our lists to let us know if you would like to be notified.

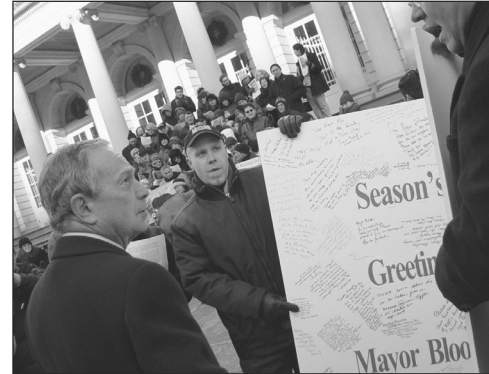
And there are more threats. An enormous mid-block warehouse at 150-60 Charles/303 West 10th Street is to be developed by Lehman Bros. and the Witkoff Group, who, under current zoning, could build a 30-story tower — even bigger than the Related project. A half-dozen nearby sites also face demolition and out-of-scale new construction. All these properties fall within the area proposed for landmarking and re-zoning by GVSHP, and we've been pushing the City to act now on our proposals to prevent a new wave of demolition and development from destroying this neighborhood.

The good news: the City has promised to rezone the Far West Village based upon GVSHP's recommendations for limiting the size of new development, and its work on such measures appears imminent. And they say that the Far West Village landmarking plan we submitted last year is under careful consideration, and landmark protections for the area will likely closely follow rezoning plans.

The bad news: a wave of demolitions and developments is cresting over this historic waterfront neighborhood, and if the City doesn't act soon, it will simply be too late.

Just before Christmas, developers razed an 1832 rowhouse at 163 Charles Street that GVSHP fought to protect. Part of a row of three similar houses on this charming side street, it will now be replaced by a

GVSHP Executive Director Andrew Berman and State Senator Tom Duane approaching Mayor Bloomberg at our City Hall press conference



We're planning a march to Save the Far West Village on May 14th, at 12:30, at 12th and West Streets. See www.gvshp.org/protectingFWV.htm.

But there is reason to be hopeful, and to keep pushing. In addition to various assurances we've received about our proposals, late last year, when met by our demonstration at City Hall, Mayor Bloomberg said that he "fundamentally agreed" with our call for immediate enactment of landmark and zoning protections for the Far West Village, and that he would see that they move ahead. The coming weeks will show if the Mayor remains true to his word.

Locksmith Sticker Menace

Difficult to remove and prone to leaving marks, a little sticker can do a lot of damage. That's why GVSHP undertook a campaign along with Councilmember Quinn to have stickers illegally posted on private property reported under a new law the City Council passed which fines violators. After GVSHP circulated information about the law, hundreds of stickers were reported and violations issued. Because so many of these businesses are shams, tracking them down is hard, though Quinn is contemplating additional legislation to make it easier. To report a sticker, call 311. See www.gvshp.org/locksmithalert.html for more information.

South Village

With a grant from the J. M. Kaplan Fund, GVSHP has commissioned a report from Mary Elizabeth Brown on the Italian-American history of the South Village. This is part of our ongoing effort to highlight the unique history and architecture of this area south of Washington Square Park, which lacks landmark protections. GVSHP recently completed two and a half years of research documenting the history of the neighborhood's 850 buildings — a study that will buttress future landmarking proposals. Meanwhile, we continue to call for LPC intervention when we uncover threats to historic buildings, such as those at 233-7 Bleecker Street. Here, questionable work has raised concerns about the integrity of the wood-and-brick buildings that stand at the corner of Carmine Street and are among the oldest in the area. For more information, see www.gvshp.org/southvillage.htm.

**233-7 Bleecker Street,
in its compromised
state**



Leibovitz Saga Continues

Two and a half years after her illegal work severely damaged three houses at 755-7 Greenwich Street, Annie Leibovitz has still not completed repairs to her landmarked houses. We are also concerned that the LPC may have allowed inappropriate changes to these buildings as part of the restoration. Without the required public hearings, LPC approved the addition of a new doorway and stoop, the creation of new windows, the alteration of an original wrought-iron fence, and the insertion of a new areaway. The Society brought in an independent expert to confirm that original bricks on the buildings' facades were being replaced with new bricks, destroying the protected original historic fabric of the building. We continue to monitor the site closely and to demand accountability from the owner and the LPC. Visit www.gvshp.org/leibovitz.htm to learn more.



Gansevoort Market

After successfully advocating for the designation of a Gansevoort Market Historic District, GVSHP continues to work to preserve the neighborhood. We're in the process of nominating the district for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places, an honor that carries with it the opportunity for grants and tax breaks to restore historic properties. We also keep an eye on plans for changes to existing buildings; in the 18 months since designation, a record number of applications has been filed with LPC. GVSHP reviews them all. And we watch out for violations of the landmarks law, recently reporting what we believe is illegal demolition at the old Woolco site, at Gansevoort and Greenwich Streets, where construction is currently underway. For more information, see www.gvshp.org/gansevoort.htm.

Legislative Update

At GVSHP's request, Councilmembers Gerson and Quinn have introduced a bill to preserve, maintain, and restore cobblestone streets. To learn more or help, visit www.gvshp.org/cobblestoneleg.html.

GVSHP has also backed two important pieces of legislation spearheaded by our colleagues at the Historic Districts Council. Passed in February, the Demolition by Neglect Bill lets the City apply civil penalties to owners of landmarked properties who willingly allow them to deteriorate to the point of their undoing. Heard in February and still awaiting action, the Demolition Delay Bill would require the LPC to review any building more than 50 years old to see if it qualifies for landmark designation before a demolition permit may be issued.

Dorms as Trojan Horses

“Community Facility” Reform Battle Goes On

are allowed to build larger-than-normally-allowable buildings under current city zoning rules. A new front has now opened in this battle, as developers seek permission to build super-sized structures by claiming that they will include “community facilities,” which then never materialize. Dorms appear to be the ruse of choice.

Eighty-one East Third Street is a case in point. On a typical East Village street of three to six stories, a developer constructed a 13-story tower by claiming it would contain dorms, doubling the building’s allowable size. When built, however, there was no school to occupy the supposed “dorm,” which in reality looked much like a typical apartment building. And while the city has prohibited occupancy of the building without a dorm in place (a position GVSHP supports), the monstrous extra bulk remains, sticking out like the proverbial sore thumb on this otherwise harmoniously scaled block.

GVSHP and local groups are asking the City to require that the six additional floors, allowed only to house a dorm, be dismantled. To ensure that we don’t see more Trojan Dorms, GVSHP is also asking the City to grant the additional bulk currently allowed for dorms

The Society continues to help lead the citywide fight to reform the rules regarding “community facilities,” a broad category including schools, hospitals, and a wide range of institutions that

only to schools — and no longer to developers claiming they’ll be leasing to schools. At the very least, the City should require, prior to construction, substantial and convincing proof that the space will be used permanently as dorms.

Most important, GVSHP continues to push for the elimination of zoning rules that allow “community facilities” to be so much larger than other types of new construction in their neighborhoods. A 13-story building, even if it is a dorm, is not appropriate on a side street like East Third Street, where seven stories is the maximum height otherwise allowed. And one need look no further than Washington Square South or Third Avenue in the East Village to see the hulking scale of legitimate community facilities that utilize the maximum bonus afforded to them under the law — and to see the damage to they do to their neighborhood.

Eighty-one East Third Street, towering over its neighbors

To fight for this type of reform, the Society continues to work with the coalition of citywide groups we helped found, and we continue to meet with city officials. GVSHP is also working with neighborhood groups in the East Village and the South Village — the two sections of the Village most vulnerable to “community facility” overdevelopment due to their zoning and their lack of landmark protections — to push for zoning changes to protect the character of these neighborhoods. We strongly believe that all new development — community facilities or otherwise — should relate to, rather than detract from, the defining traits of the neighborhood by maintaining a scale and height appropriate to and compatible with its surroundings. For more information, call us or visit www.gvshp.org/afterkimmel.htm.





The Variety Arts Theater, 110 Third Avenue, before the theater was closed and the marquee and all façade ornament removed

references to unused development rights. Its continued survival as a theater seems tenuous. And in the East Village, when the Society got word that the Variety Arts

Theater, one of New York's oldest theaters (and likely its oldest surviving one-time movie theater), was being sold for development, we immediately asked the LPC to consider designation for the 100-year-old building. The LPC refused, and the owner immediately began removing the distinctive marquee and lettering from the building's facade.

Spurred by these losses, GVSHP is taking a proactive approach, examining the roots of the problems facing downtown theaters and seeking solutions to keep them in their homes. Theater advocates, elected officials, preservationists, community leaders, and cultural institutions were invited by the Society to meet and form a working group. The single biggest problem identified was real-estate pressure — rising values mean that owners believe that they can make more money pushing theaters out,

demolishing buildings, and developing new ones.

But several possible solutions were identified as well. Theater groups are frequently looking for new homes, and, therefore, the working group would serve as a conduit for information about available space. Knowing that New York prospers from its cultural vitality, we decided to approach the City about developing mechanisms to help theaters remain in their homes rather than waste money having to find and build new usable spaces. And seeing that there are several inspiring new theater success stories downtown, we tried to put struggling groups in touch with the new Fourth Arts Block in the East Village, the Perry Street Theater, and the How! Festival — for advice and potential opportunities for growth. Additionally, through our South Village preservation effort and other work, the Society will be developing cases for saving theater buildings through the landmarking process.

This effort is just getting underway, and with State Senator Tom Duane we hope to meet with city officials soon to discuss additional help for theaters. If you are interested in finding out more, call us or go to www.gvshp.org/theaters.htm.

Keeping Theater in Its Place

GVSHHP Works to Save Buildings and Culture

The current real-estate boom in Lower Manhattan is taking its toll on one of the Village's greatest resources and one of its defining attractions: its theaters. That's why GVSHP has founded an effort to keep not only

the buildings but also the art form in our neighborhood.

The last year has seen some prominent casualties. Demolition began last summer on the renowned but long-dark Circle In the Square Theater on Bleecker Street. In spite of our requests that the LPC save the building through landmarking, the theater was razed to make way for a nine-story apartment building. Nearby, the Sullivan Street Playhouse, former home of *The Fantasticks*, the longest-running play in modern history, has been empty for two years. It's now being advertised for sale at a steep asking price and with

Federal Protections Advance

More of Downtown's Oldest Houses to Be Preserved

Street (near West Third), in October the LPC designated a fourth, at 4 St. Mark's Place, built in 1832. The LPC also held a hearing on a fifth house, at 67 Greenwich Street in Lower Manhattan. Here, however, the owner vigorously opposed the designation, claiming that the structural weaknesses in the house — which has stood on the site since 1811, surviving 9/11 and the construction of the nearby Brooklyn Battery Tunnel — did not allow for the building's preservation.

Fortunately, a review by an independent engineer found the building to be perfectly capable of remaining structurally sound. At a hearing on April 21st, this evidence was presented to the LPC, and GVSHHP, NYLPC, and our allies pushed the Commission to move ahead with designation of this venerable structure. Still remaining on our list of 13 federal-era houses (which represent the first architectural style of the newly independent American republic) are 7 Leroy Street; 57 Sullivan Street; 94, 94½, 96, 486, and 488 Greenwich Street; and 2 Oliver Street. To find out more information or to help, call our office or see www.gvshp.org/federalrowhouses.htm.

Four St. Mark's Place, the latest from our list of 13 to be landmarked

Progress continues on the effort to designate 13 federal-era (1790-1835) houses proposed for landmark designation by GVSHHP and the New York Landmarks Conservancy (NYLC).

Following the designation last June of three of these houses, at 127-131 MacDougal



From the Director

Two thousand five, the Society's 25th anniversary year, is shaping up to be perhaps our most critical yet. It's clear that the fate of the waterfront will be determined in the coming weeks: Will the Village be hemmed in by a wall of high-rise towers, or will the landmark and zoning protections we've been fighting for be implemented to preserve the scale and fabric that have defined the Village for generations? More than ever, we've been able to get the City's ear on our most urgent issues, and the responses we've received — from agency heads to the Mayor himself — have been, in some cases, encouraging.

But it will take work on our part as well as theirs to see promises kept and words put into action. We must push the City to move in as comprehensive and speedy a manner as possible on preserving our waterfront. We must hold them to their word to address the institutional overdevelopment — made possible by current "community facility" zoning regulations — that threatens to overwhelm our neighborhoods. We must work to uphold the integrity of landmarks law and ensure that it is evenly enforced, for the famous and the anonymous. And we must fight for the landmark and zoning protections that areas like the South and East Village need but lack.

As you can see, the last few months have contained both disappointments and signs of hope. As always, your help will be essential to making our preservation work a reality. Increased membership, support, and volunteers have allowed us to grow considerably in recent years. I hope you'll continue to help us to meet the growing challenges our neighborhood faces.



The Society gratefully acknowledges the following for grants supporting our work over the past year: The Kaplen Foundation, The J. M. Kaplan Fund, the New York State Council on the Arts, The Lily Auchincloss Foundation, the NYU Community Fund, and the NYU T. G. White Fund. We also wish to acknowledge the work of City Councilmembers Christine Quinn and Alan Gerson, State Senator Tom Duane, Assemblymember Deborah Glick, and the Manhattan delegation of the City Council in securing funding for GVSHHP through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

Support Preservation: Join the Society

New membership benefits include a 28-page self-guided walking tour booklet of Gansevoort Market; invitations to our many lectures, programs, and walking tours (in many cases free or at a reduced rate); free access to the Society's research sources; regular issues of our newsletter; and a free six-month subscription to *The Villager* newspaper. **Most important, your support will make GVSHP a more effective preservation leader.** The Society also invites members to give memberships to friends and neighbors for only \$25. (That's half price!) Please use the form below, and we will send a lovely gift packet, informing the recipient of this thoughtful gift. Give at the **\$100 level or above**, and you'll receive a free set of Greenwich Village **notecards**. Give at the **\$500 level or above**, and you'll receive an invitation to a **special thank-you event** at a unique Village location.

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And order these gifts from the Society:

- Discovering Greenwich Village.** A 12-page activity book for children ages seven to twelve. \$3 plus 60-cents shipping.
- The Greenwich Village Waterfront, An Historic Study.** A 46-page booklet. \$5 plus 60-cents shipping.
- Greenwich Village T-shirt.** A white t-shirt with green lettering. GVSHP logo on the front, with a list of famous Village residents on the back. In L and XL (please circle one). \$15 plus \$2.50 shipping.
- Save Gansevoort Market T-shirt.** A white t-shirt with a red Save Gansevoort Market logo on the front. In M, L, and XL (please circle one). \$15 plus \$2.50 shipping.

- Set of Greenwich Village Notecards.** Eight cards and envelopes featuring images from GVSHP's photograph archive. \$8 plus \$1 shipping.
- Greenwich Village Waterfront Poster.** A full-color 16-by-24-inch poster featuring photographs of architectural details from waterfront buildings. \$5 plus \$2 shipping.
- Save Gansevoort Market.** A 28-page walking-tour booklet. Free plus 60-cents shipping charge.

PLEASE NOTE: When you order a gift, please check the box or put in the number of items you want. Write your name and address in the form above if they are different than they appear on your check.

The Struggle for St. Ann's

Extraordinary Religious Edifice Fights for Its Life

on Fifth Avenue at 65th Street) and, in 1870, St. Ann's Catholic Church. A magnificent new nave was soon added by the architect Napoleon LeBrun. So St. Ann's remained for over 130 years, with the church eventually becoming the home of the Cathedral of the Armenian Catholic Church in North America. Al Smith, the governor of New York and the Democratic Presidential nominee in 1928, was a parishioner here, as was Peter Maurin, a founder of the Catholic Worker movement.

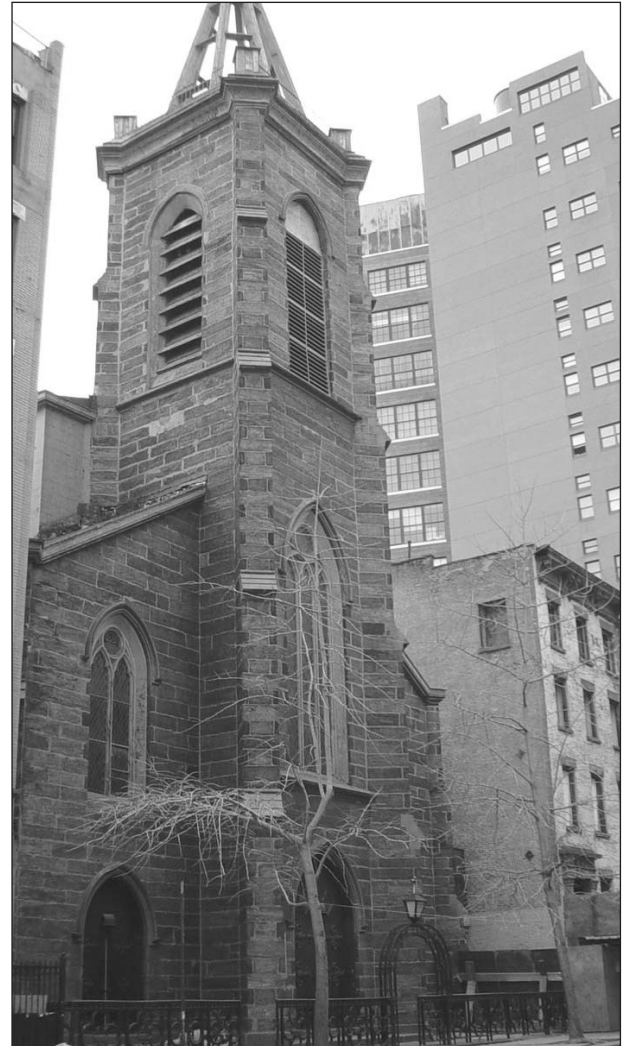
In 2004 the church was sold and closed. GVSHP urged the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to consider designating the church building and its rectory landmarks, based on their unique history and powerful architecture. In addition to the stunning facade and tower, built of locally quarried stone, the adjacent rectory was a well-preserved 1840s rowhouse with rare and prominently intact Greek Revival details, and the church itself included an unusual and stunningly florid 19th century wrought-iron front gate. But LPC refused to act, so GVSHP instead reached out to the new owners. We urged the developer to look at ways of preserving at least the original facade and tower of the church, as well as its gate, and including them as part of a new plan for the site. We also persuaded the developer to allow the salvaging of the unique and irreplaceable architectural details of the rectory and the church sections slated for demolition. This way, even if parts of the buildings were lost, some of their unique ornament might at least find new life. (Most of the ecclesiastical details of the interior of the church itself have already been removed by the Archdiocese).

As we go to press, the situation has not been resolved. The developer has expressed an openness to maintaining key features of the church, including the original facade and tower, but it's not yet clear if the company is willing to do so in a manner compatible with zoning requirements for the site. GVSHP intends to work with the developer to find ways to integrate these original elements into any future site plan, and to discourage any further loss of historic fabric from this wonderful structure. For more information or to help, call our office or see www.gvshp.org/St.Anns.htm.

With the frequency of conflict around religious issues, a structure that at various times has served our city's three major faiths — Protestants, Catholics, and Jews — would seem to offer a beacon of hope. But just such a structure, St. Ann's Church, at 124 East 12th Street, is holding on to its last breath of life. Last year the Archdiocese of New York announced it was closing several of its churches in Manhattan. GVSHP immediately joined a citywide coalition led by the New York Landmarks Conservancy to find ways to try to ensure the survival of these venerable structures, which tell so much about the history of our city.

St. Ann's Church and rectory, between Third and Fourth Avenues, immediately appeared vulnerable. The facade and the tower of the church were built in 1847 as the Twelfth Street Baptist Church. In 1856 the building became Temple Emanu-El (later the city's largest synagogue, now

St. Ann's Church and rectory: the rectory has been demolished, but the facade and tower could be saved



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The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation was founded in 1980 to preserve the architectural heritage and cultural history of the Village.

The GVSHP office 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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