Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

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TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
IN OPPOSITION TO VARIANCE APPLICATION 299-12-BZ
40-56 10th Avenue, Manhattan
June 17, 2013

Good afternoon Commissioners, my name is Andrew Berman, and I am the Executive Director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the largest membership organization in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. On behalf of our membership, I strongly urge you to reject the variance application for a 34% increase in bulk for a proposed development at this location based upon a purported "hardship."

The notion that this applicant would suffer any hardship in trying to develop this property under the existing zoning strains credulity. Numerous developments have gone up in the immediate vicinity with the same or less favorable conditions and, under the same zoning restrictions, have managed to profit handsomely. The subsurface conditions underneath this site are far from unique, and are found up and down the Manhattan waterfront. The notion that the High Line covering a tiny fraction of the site is a net negative for development is baffling at best. The unique proximity and relationship to the High Line that any development on this site will enjoy increases its value, and its profitability, exponentially. Additionally, any development here will have virtually unimpeded Hudson River views, a unique amenity.

Other developments in the vicinity have been built under the allowable floor area ratio of 5 without some of the advantages this development would have, and have suffered no "hardship." The new home of the Whitney Museum will be located just a block and a half south of this site where derelict buildings once stood, no doubt increasing greatly the profitability of the proposed development. Pier 57, which was a noisy bus garage or a derelict hulk when some of these other developments went up, is set to be transformed into an "innovative hub of cultural, recreational and public market activities," according to the Hudson River Park Trust. And the High Line itself was still an abandoned and disused rail trestle when some of these neighboring developments went up under the existing zoning restrictions, as opposed to the world-class destination it has now become.

We have no objections to the proposed development setting back differently than the zoning requires, as this would have no negative impact upon the surrounding neighborhood. Increasing the bulk of the proposed development, however, would have such a negative impact. If multiple nearby property owners can abide by the existing zoning and make a more than reasonable return on their investment, there is no reason why this developer cannot as well. I urge you in the strongest of terms to reject the requested bulk variance.

Thank you.