



Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

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TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

437 West 13th Street
January 08, 2009

Good evening and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. We have reviewed the proposal for 437 West 13th Street, a site which was to be included in the Gansevoort Market Historic District, but removed following the lobbying efforts of its owners. We are strongly opposed to the proposed variances.

Regarding the specific variances, we understand the High Line to be an asset to the property that would significantly benefit the development, not impose a hardship as the applicant claims. To call the High Line a hardship, and try to use that to add additional height and bulk to further overshadow the public park is entirely unjustified. The proposed 215-foot glass tower overpowers, and is completely out-of-context with, the neighboring low-rise historic district. It is contextual not with the historic neighborhood, but rather with the recently-completed Standard Hotel, which itself casts an imposing shadow over the buildings below.

Moreover, the proposed opaque Northern façade would serve as a bleak backdrop to the adjacent buildings, whose low-rise, textured and “gritty” aesthetic speak to the essence of the Gansevoort Market Historic District. We have also asked the applicants to reconsider the design for the lower floors of the Southern façade, where the outer wall seems to end abruptly at the sidewalk with no inviting features.

Also unjustified is the request for a variance to add larger retail space than would be allowed under the current zoning. The Gansevoort Market neighborhood, especially around Washington Street, has lent itself well to the boutique-style retail that has thrived there for several years. This unique and inviting nature has always distinguished the area from grander New York shopping neighborhoods such as SoHo and Fifth Avenue. The presence of a large, potentially 3-story retailer at this site would dramatically and adversely affect the character of the Gansevoort Market neighborhood and the scale of traffic that would need to pass through the area. We see no valid reason why such an allowance should be granted.

We strongly urge Community Board 2 to vote against the applicant’s requests for height, setback, bulk and use variances for this project. Thank you.