



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

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TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED
NOHO HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION
City Council Landmarks Subcommittee Hearing
August 12, 2008

Thank you members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Andrew Berman, and I am the Executive Director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. GVSHP is the largest membership organization in Greenwich Village, NoHo, and the East Village.

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation strongly supports the proposed expansion of the NoHo Historic District in its entirety, and urges the Subcommittee to uphold the designation as is. Neighborhood residents, community leaders, and preservationists have been fighting to extend landmark protections to NoHo for more than a dozen years. In that time, much of the historic fabric of NoHo has been lost, while a considerable amount of inappropriate development has taken place, along with some more sensitively designed and scaled development.

The NoHo Historic District expansion approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission is not everything that proponents of landmark protections for NoHo had fought or hoped for. However, it is an important step forward, and it will subject many important sites to landmarks regulations. It would be a shame to further reduce the proposed historic district designation, which is already less expansive than many would argue it should be.

Specifically, it is critical that the Edison Parking lot and the White House hotel be included in the designation. While the Edison Parking lot has no historic resources and we would have no objections to it being built upon, the site is entirely surrounded by the NoHo Historic District and the NoHo Historic District extension. Designation would simply ensure that any new development there is reviewed by the Landmarks Preservation Commission to ensure that the development is appropriate in its design for its historic surroundings; recent development in NoHo shows what a contribution well-designed new construction can make to the neighborhood, and what a detraction poorly-designed construction can be. If this site were carved out of the district expansion, it would in essence create a donut hole allowing completely inappropriate development to take place at this prominent intersection in the very heart of NoHo where it could have a devastating effect.

The White House Hotel, on the other hand, does already contribute to the history and sense of place of NoHo, particularly the Bowery. A one-time flop-house along a street famous for such hotels over the last century and a half, this is one of the few such remaining institutions on the Bowery. While landmarking does not control or preserve use, and the White House's function and clientele has

already begun to change, its scale, features, and history are all integral parts of the history of this singularly important street, and should be preserved.

I urge you to approve the NoHo Historic District expansion as is. Thank you