



Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

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October 19, 2009

Hon. Michael Bloomberg, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Robert LiMandri, Commissioner
New York City Department of Buildings
280 Broadway, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Illegal approval of building plans for 178 Bleecker Street, Manhattan

Dear Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner LiMandri,

I write to express my strong objections to the approval today by the Department of Buildings (DOB) of an application to build an 8-story, 75 ft. tall building at the above-referenced location, and to demand that such approvals be revoked immediately.

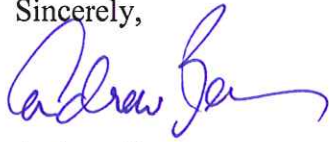
Such a development clearly violates the restrictions of the "Sliver Law," which limits new construction on lots narrower than 45 feet in zoning districts such as this to no more than the width of the street it faces, which in this case is 60 feet. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP) called this attempt to receive approvals for an illegal development at this location to the attention of the DOB nine months ago (see attached letter), and urged that no such approvals be given. It is outrageous that in spite of the clear evidence that such a development would violate zoning restrictions for this neighborhood, these plans were approved.

There has been considerable effort in recent years to preserve the historic character of this South Village neighborhood through a variety of means, including landmark designation. Unfortunately, while the city has slowly taken modest steps in this direction, it has also allowed historically significant buildings such as 178 Bleecker Street (among many others) to be demolished. With this approval, it is now also allowing out-of-scale and out-of-character development to take its place.

178 Bleecker Street is part of a historically significant row of 1862 houses of nearly uniform height in the South Village. It is also directly adjacent to the MacDougal-Sullivan Gardens Historic District, one of New York's first and most diminutively-scaled historic districts. An 8-story building at this site will destroy the scale and integrity of both the row of which it is a part and of its landmarked neighbors.

I hope this terrible error will be corrected immediately and approvals rescinded for this inappropriate and illegal development.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Robert Tierney
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stronger
City Council Speaker Christine Quinn
State Senator Tom Duane
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
community groups



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January 30, 2009

Magdi Mossad, P.E.
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
New York City Department of Buildings
280 Broadway, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: 178 Bleecker Street, Manhattan

Dear Commissioner Mossad,

I write regarding the above-referenced premises and the attempt by the owner to obtain approvals for construction of a building greater than 60 feet in height on the site. I do not believe that zoning regulations permit construction of a building of more than 60 feet in height on this 22 foot wide lot, and thus I urge the Department not to issue any permits that would allow such construction.

According to the Manhattan Borough President's Office, Bleecker Street's mapped width is 60 feet. Because the 'Sliver Law' applies in this R7-2 zoning district, that should limit any new construction or any additions to existing construction on lots of less than 45 feet wide such as this to no more than 60 feet in height, unless the building currently exceeds that height. Though the owner has recently merged lots with the two adjacent lots to the west, this prohibition should nevertheless remain applicable in this case.

Recent applications filed by the owner claim that the three buildings are exactly 60 feet in height, in spite of the fact that prior Certificates of Occupancy and other building permit applications for several of these 5-story buildings indicate heights of considerably less than 60 feet. Additionally, it would be highly unusual for the height of a 5-story 19th century residential building of such modest dimensions to be 60 feet. Thus if any DOB approvals would be contingent upon an accurate measure of the height of the buildings, I would strongly urge that the Department insist on a survey from a licensed surveyor, rather than merely taking the word of the architect and allowing this information to be self-certified.

There has been extreme concern by neighbors and community leaders and organizations about the planned demolition and scale of new development on this site. While it may lie outside of the jurisdiction of the Department of Buildings, the Department should be aware that the site lies within an area proposed for historic district designation for which there is broad community and public support, and which is currently under review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The site in question also lies directly adjacent to the existing MacDougal-Sullivan Gardens Historic District, and is part of a row of nine similar 19th century houses which could be greatly impacted by any demolition or construction here.

While it may have no legal effect upon the granting of permits for this site, I believe it is important that the Department recognizes that there is a very strong desire among many in this community not to see this building demolished. In the unfortunate case that it is demolished, it is of the utmost importance that any new construction is done safely and does not damage or destabilize adjacent or nearby buildings, and does not exceed an appropriate height for its context, as the Silver Law requires.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrew Berman". The signature is fluid and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Buildings Commissioner Robert LiMandri
Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Robert Tierney
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stronger
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