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# the ANTHEMION

Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

gvshp.org

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## Campaign to Protect South Village Launched

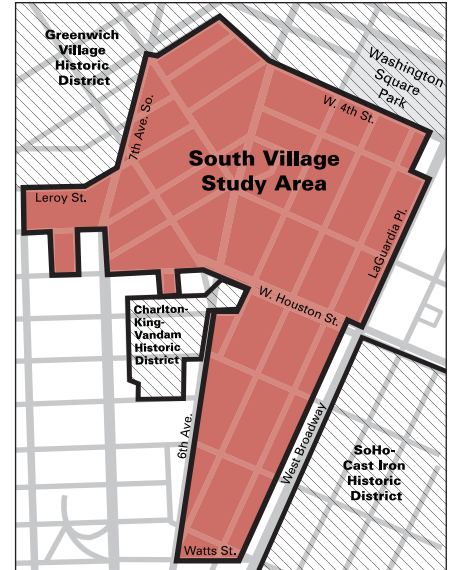
At the end of 2006, GVSHP submitted a proposal to the City for landmark designation of the South Village, the largely unprotected area south of Washington Square Park and West 4th Street, and officially launched our Historic South Village Preservation Project.

After four years of exhaustive research on this 40-block area, GVSHP commissioned a report by renowned architectural historian Andrew Dolkart on the history and architecture of the South Village, supporting our argument for landmark protections for the area. The report and proposal document the South Village's unique historic significance as an archetypal immigrant community and as a crucial stepping-stone for Italians in America; as a laboratory of working-class architecture and an intact vestige of turn-of-the-last century New York; as the site of important cultural innovations and events; and as an important location in the history of New York's African-American and lesbian and gay communities.

Believe it or not, GVSHP's proposed South Village Historic District would, if designated, be the first such district in New York City to honor immigrant history and architecture. In fact, streets like Bleecker, Carmine, MacDougal and Sullivan, whose colorful buildings and lively shops and cafes many consider the heart of the Village, were likely excluded from the original Greenwich Village Historic District in 1969 because at the time tenements and working-class architecture were perceived by many as unworthy of historic preservation. With this proposal, we seek to change that perception, not only for the South Village, but beyond.

GVSHP has formed an advisory board made up of local institutions, block associations, community leaders, property owners, merchants, architectural historians, and scholars of Italian-American history to help guide and support this project. In addition to the landmark proposal, GVSHP is also undertaking educational programming to document and showcase the incredible and compelling history of this too-long-overlooked area.

With increasing pressure for change, it's more important than ever that the South Village's history be documented and honored and its wonderful architecture be preserved. We anticipate our South Village project, which will be an enormous new undertaking, being a major focus of GVSHP's activities over the next several years. Go to our South Village webpage at



[www.gvshp.org/preserve/southvillage.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/preserve/southvillage.htm) to read our landmark proposal, look up the history of any building in the area, take a virtual tour of the neighborhood, or learn how to help.

GVSHP's South Village landmark report was funded by Preserve New York, a grant program of the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts. Funding for educational programming and research on the South Village was funded in part by the J.M. Kaplan Fund, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Councilmember Alan Gerson, State Senator Tom Duane, Assemblymember Deborah Glick, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

## Condo-Hotels to Trump Zoning Protections?

GVSHP has been leading the fight against Donald Trump's plan for a 45-story "condo-hotel" at Spring and Varick Streets, which would circumvent zoning protections and allow—for the first time ever—similar luxury high-rises to be built in other neighborhoods where they are supposed to be prohibited.

In June 2006, Trump announced on the final episode of *The Apprentice* plans for this first-ever condo-hotel in a manufacturing zone in New York City. The location is significant because while "transient" hotels (where people do not live and rooms are rented on a daily basis) are allowed in manufacturing zones, residences and residential hotels are not. But in condo-hotels, units are bought by individuals, who can stay in them for long periods of time and/or rent them out to the public; they are typically high-rise second homes for the

jet-set. GVSHP argued that condo-hotels like these are not true transient hotels, but more like a residence or residential hotel.

The distinction is important for several reasons. The booming condo-hotel business is much more appealing to developers than transient hotels because the money is made up-front; therefore once condo-hotels are allowed in these zones, much more new large-scale development becomes likely. Manufacturing zones include large sections of the Village, the Meatpacking District, SoHo, NoHo, Tribeca, Chelsea, the Flatiron, Hell's Kitchen, and Brooklyn and Queens, so many critical areas would be affected. While new development in manufacturing zones is rare, their zoning (unlike in other areas) encourages tall towers. And finally, checks and balances in our system are supposed to allow the public a say in any major land use matter, with hearings, votes, and environmental impacts measured. A closed-door decision to allow

condo-hotels into all these neighborhoods, as Trump was seeking, would undermine all these public protections.

GVSHP helped put together a broad coalition of local and citywide groups to fight this plan, much as in our successful fight against a similar tower in the Meatpacking District in 2004. To our great dismay, however, in November the City claimed that the zoning did not prohibit condo-hotels like Trump's in these areas, and they would allow him to proceed. The City did say they would try to get Trump to voluntarily sign a "restrictive declaration" to limit how the condo-hotel could be used in order to meet zoning requirements; we questioned how helpful and effective this would be and if it wasn't more geared towards protecting the City from criticism and legal challenge than protecting our neighborhoods.

This has left us with a few options. One is the possibility of overturning or reversing the City's ruling, which GVSHP and several neighbors of the project are exploring. Another is to push the City to tighten up the zoning regulations to make it undeniably and explicitly clear that these types of developments are not allowed in these areas. GVSHP is urging the City and the City Council to do exactly this. Finally, because the zoning for the area around Trump's project does allow developments of this size (though not condo-hotels, we would argue), we are asking both the City and City Council to change the zoning to more appropriately limit the height and size of development in this area.

As we go to press, human remains possibly from a 19th century graveyard were found on the site. GVSHP has provided the City with historic data about the site and urged that all digging be halted until the remains are



GVSHP Exec. Dir. Andrew Berman urging the Community Board to oppose the Trump condo-hotel.

fully and independently evaluated, and a plan for their care formulated. Go to [www.gvshp.org/preserve/trump.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/preserve/trump.htm) for more information and updates.

## Seeking Zoning Protections for the East Village

The East Village has seen increasing threats to its distinctive character, with out-of-scale development by institutions and private developers at 81 East 3rd Street and atop the Theater for the New City at 155 1st Avenue. Several large sites currently occupied by churches are being sold off, and large numbers of buildings in the neighborhood have recently been purchased by big developers, which means further out-of-scale development could come soon. Therefore GVSHP has been working with local elected officials, community groups, and the Community Board to seek zoning protections to better preserve the neighborhood.

GVSHP has urged that contextual zoning—which would reduce the size and height of allowable development, limit the transfer of air rights, and eliminate the current zoning bonus for building dorms and hotels—be adopted for the area. Some community activists have also urged the adoption of provisions to promote the creation and retention of affordable housing.

In July, 2006, the City came out with a plan in response to many of these recommendations, which is now being presented to the public for comment before any formal review process begins and the series of votes it must undergo are taken. The plan can be viewed on our website at [www.gvshp.org/preserve/pdf/EVRezoning.pdf](http://www.gvshp.org/preserve/pdf/EVRezoning.pdf). GVSHP pointed to some strong positives and negatives in the plan.



**Out-of-context tower which would be prohibited under new zoning for East Village.**

On the positive side, the plan did include contextual zoning with stricter limits on height, size, and air rights transfers, and an elimination of the bonus for dorms and other “community facilities” in much of the neighborhood east of 3rd Avenue. However, in spite of insistent lobbying by GVSHP and many others, the City stubbornly refused to include the 3rd and 4th Avenue corridors and the blocks in between in the rezoning, keeping in place the current zoning which allows developments like NYU’s planned 26-story mega-dorm on East 12th Street (NYU has in fact identified these blocks as an area of expected future growth, prompting accusations of the City protecting NYU rather than our neighborhood). On sidestreets, the City’s plan would add some protections but might eliminate others which could encourage ungainly addi-

tions atop existing tenement buildings. And the City’s proposal included upzoning Houston Street and Avenue D to allow very large luxury developments, with just 20% of the units reserved for affordable housing.

GVSHP has been working with many in the neighborhood to push for changes to improve the plan. We are also working with the Community Board on formulating a community-initiated rezoning of the 3rd–4th Avenue blocks if the City continues to refuse to include them in this plan.

GVSHP strongly encourages you to get involved with this process, which will have a huge effect on the future of the East Village. For more information and the latest updates, go to [www.gvshp.org/preserve/EVcorridor.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/preserve/EVcorridor.htm).

## NYU Mega-Dorm Latest Cause for Concern

NYU’s continuing growth in our neighborhood remains a great cause for concern for GVSHP. This issue came to a head this summer when NYU began construction on a 26-story, 700-bed mega-dorm at 120 East 12th Street, breaking multiple promises to the community about consultation and notification on the project, which would be the tallest building in the entire East Village.

When NYU announced their intention to build a dorm at this site in late 2005, they also promised to “do things differently this time,” to solicit community input on the project at an early stage so that perhaps some concerns could be addressed, and to keep the public informed of their decision. GVSHP, working with neighbors, immediately identified the size and height of the dorm as the biggest concerns, along with the plan for

an open plaza in front of the building on 12th Street. GVSHP, neighbors, and the Community Board suggested several alternatives to the current plan to address these problems, and urged that the size of the dorm, made so great by a questionable air rights transfer from the adjacent post office and utilization of the maximum possible “community facility” bulk bonus, be reduced. NYU promised to seriously consider all suggestions, and get back with their response before proceeding. They also promised to consult with GVSHP and neighbors on the design of the exterior of the building.

But then this summer GVSHP and neighbors of the site discovered that plans had been filed for the dorm and construction was beginning, with no word on NYU’s decisions about the design. After getting copies of the plans filed with the City, we were shocked to

discover that not only had NYU not made a single suggested change to the design and not informed the community about their decision as promised, but at 261 feet the dorm was actually even taller than we had been led to believe it would be.

GVSHP, neighbors, State Senator Tom Duane, and City Councilmember Rosie Mendez protested this awful decision. The Community Board issued a stinging rebuke of NYU. Eventually NYU apologized (sort of), but made no move towards changing their plans. GVSHP is working with neighbors who are pursuing several legal strategies to try to stop the development.

Meanwhile, we continue to push for NYU and the City to find locations outside of the Village for any future growth by the university. Partially in response to GVSHP’s call for

such alternatives to NYU’s ongoing unabated growth in our neighborhoods, Borough President Stringer and other local elected officials have formed a task force to deal with development issues associated with NYU, in which GVSHP and other community groups, as well as the public, will be able to participate. We intend to use this as an opportunity to hold the university’s feet to the fire on several fronts, including: the call to find sites outside of our neighborhoods for future NYU growth; pressing the university to keep their word about consulting with and informing the community about their projects; and NYU President Sexton’s four year old promise to embark upon real campus planning for the university that would include providing long-term plans to the community to review and provide feedback on. For more information, see [www.gvsHP.org/preserve/NYUdorm.htm](http://www.gvsHP.org/preserve/NYUdorm.htm) and [www.gvsHP.org/preserve/NYUexpansion.htm](http://www.gvsHP.org/preserve/NYUexpansion.htm).



GVSHP members and neighbors protesting NYU’s mega-dorm plans.

## Making Sure Landmarks Are Landmarked

We usually think that getting a building landmarked is the real battle when it comes to protecting our neighborhood’s special heritage. But GVSHP has discovered that ensuring that landmarked buildings are recorded and regulated as such can be just as big of a battle.

One of the most important ways that landmarked buildings receive their protections is that once they are designated, the Department of Buildings (DOB) is supposed to mark them as landmarks in their records. That way, if an owner tries to get a permit from DOB to knock down a landmarked building or build something on top of it, DOB will know not to issue the permit, and will instead direct the owner to the Landmarks Preservation Com-



**Eighteen of twenty-six landmarked buildings on Washington Mews were not marked as landmarks in Buildings Department records.**

mission to evaluate and hold hearings on any such major request (requests to knock down landmarked buildings are of course virtually never granted).

That's how it's supposed to work. But in 2003, after GVSHP successfully fought to get the Gansevoort Market Historic District designated, we stumbled upon cases where buildings in the historic district were never marked as such in DOB records, and as a result, in at least one case, an inappropriate permit was issued to allow erection of a billboard on a building. GVSHP promptly surveyed the entire district and found more than 10% of the buildings never received the appropriate notation in DOB records; we reported this, and assumed the problem was solved.

Then in 2005 and 2006, as the City was,

at our urging, considering extending the Greenwich Village Historic District west and creating the new Weehawken Street Historic District, we decided not to leave such things to chance, and surveyed both new districts before problems could occur. To our dismay, we again found nearly 10% of the buildings improperly marked, and again brought the oversights to the City's attention to be resolved.

While we had hoped that the problem stemmed from new computer systems and only applied to new districts, GVSHP nevertheless decided to survey the entire Greenwich Village Historic District, the city's largest and one of its first, to see if the records were accurate for this 37-year old historic district.

It's a good thing we did. We were shocked to

discover that about 17% of the buildings in the Greenwich Village Historic District—some 337 buildings—had no record of being landmarked in the DOB systems; this means an owner could have come in and obtained demolition permits without the landmark status of the building ever being considered. This included such iconic Village sites as the houses on Washington Square North and converted stables on Washington Mews.

We immediately brought this to the City's attention, providing them with a list of every building lacking the appropriate notation as landmarked, and were soon told the problem had been solved.

Instead, we found many of the unmarked buildings were still not marked as landmarks, and in fact, the City actually unmarked several Village buildings which had previously had proper notations as landmarks!

After several further rounds of corrections, all landmarked buildings in the Village appeared to finally be correctly marked as such. However, we must get to the root of this very disturbing problem and be sure that communities throughout the city are aware of this potential danger to their landmarked buildings. Thus GVSHP has asked the City Council to hold oversight hearings on this process, resolve this systemic problem, and find out why this key means of protecting our neighborhoods does not seem to be working as it should. For more information, see [www.gvshp.org/preserve/landmarkrecords.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/preserve/landmarkrecords.htm).

# gvshp

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## GVSHP: A Record of Accomplishment

**2003**—Gansevoort Market Historic District designated

**2004**—127, 129, and 131 MacDougal Street landmarked; 500-foot tall tower at 848 Washington Street defeated

**2005**—Far West Village Downzoning enacted; 4 St. Mark's Place and 67 Greenwich Street landmarked

**2006**—Greenwich Village Historic District expanded and Weehawken Street Historic District designated

**2007**—Campaign for South Village Historic District begins

## Far West Village

In response to a broad campaign led by GVSHP to save the Far West Village from overdevelopment, in 2005 the City promised to extend the Greenwich Village Historic District three blocks west, create a new Weehawken Street Historic District, and designate eight individual landmarks in the Far West Village. These were promised to be done by Spring 2006. The historic district designations took place in May of this year, but the individual designations have taken longer. In October, the City held hearings on the first of three of these eight promised landmarks, and we are pushing for a vote to designate soon. We also continue to push for the five remaining promised designations to move ahead as quickly as possible. For more information or to help, go to [www.gvshp.org/preserve/fwindividuals.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/preserve/fwindividuals.htm).



128 East 13th Street faces demolition if not landmarked.

## A Rare Save

This summer, GVSHP discovered a plan by the new owners of 128 East 13th Street, the last surviving horse auction mart in New York City, to build a new apartment building on the site. The existing building had served for decades as the studio of artist Frank Stella. Acting swiftly, GVSHP immediately asked the City to landmark the building; while the developer had obtained approval for plans for the new building, he had not yet secured demolition permits, which gave us an opening to save the building. The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) acted swiftly, holding a hearing on the building (the required first step) and putting in place measures to protect the building until the vote took place. Dozens turned out to support designation of the old mart, which research provided by GVSHP showed had been frequented by the Vanderbilts and the Belmonts at the turn of the century, and had become a training school for female assembly-line workers during World War II. While initial action by the LPC keeps this remarkable survivor safe for now, we continue to push for landmark designation as soon as possible to ensure the building's permanent preservation. See [www.gvshp.org/preserve/stable.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/preserve/stable.htm).

## Meatpacking District—the New Times Square?

One of many challenges facing the Meatpacking District since GVSHP secured landmark status for most of the neighborhood in 2003 is illegal billboards. With the exception of a few which preceded landmark designation, no billboard in the Gansevoort Market Historic District (which covers roughly the eastern 3/4 of the neighborhood) is legal, since they have not received LPC

approval. Even many billboards in the non-landmarked western 1/4 of the neighborhood are not legal due to zoning and building regulations. GVSHP regularly monitors this neighborhood for such violations and has sent a comprehensive survey to the City asking for vigorous enforcement against such illegal encroachments. Without these illegal billboards reported to the City and demands for a strong response, the Meatpacking District, with its increasing crowds and open spaces between buildings, could become a new mini-Times Square, and we are working hard to prevent this. See [www.gvshp.org/preserve/GansvBlbd.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/preserve/GansvBlbd.htm).

in  
brief

## Remembering Jane Jacobs

GVSHP has spent much time in the last eight months paying tribute to our early advisor and constant inspiration Jane Jacobs, who died in April. In June we co-sponsored, with the Center for the Living City, a public memorial to Jane in Washington Square Park, with speakers from a wide array of fields that were influenced by her teachings. This summer, GVSHP also put forward a proposal to co-name the section of Hudson Street where Jane lived (and which she wrote about in *Death and Life of Great American Cities*) "Jane Jacobs Way," and to rename adjacent Bleecker Park "Jane Jacobs Park." The Community Board recommended approval of the renamings, and the City Council made the street renaming official in November (the sign-changing ceremony is still to come). In October, Keith McNally generously hosted a gala fundraiser for GVSHP at Balthazar Restaurant honoring Jane's legacy, with Paul Goldberger and Calvin Trillin as featured speakers. We are committed to continuing to remember the remarkable contributions of this pioneering preservationist. See [www.gvshp.org/about/janejacobs.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/about/janejacobs.htm).

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