



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

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April 18, 2008

John Sexton
President, New York University
70 Washington Square South, rm. 1216
New York, NY 10012

**Re: NYU plans to demolish Provincetown Playhouse building,
133-137 MacDougal Street**

Dear President Sexton:

I write to urge the University, in the strongest of terms, to reconsider its plans to demolish the Provincetown Playhouse building.

At this delicate time in the University's efforts to build trust and establish a constructive dialogue and working relationship with its neighbors, this exactly the wrong thing for NYU to do. The Provincetown Playhouse building is an incredibly important piece of the history of the Village, of New York City, and of the Off-Broadway Theater movement. The "Planning Principles" which NYU signed with Borough President Stringer's NYU Community Task Force (including GVSHP) stresses that the University should "prioritize....re-use before new development." Also, NYU did eventually endorse the proposed South Village Historic District, within which the Provincetown Playhouse building lies. To raze this building would seem to belie both commitments which the university has made.

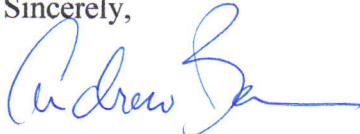
There is no reason not to instead look to re-use this building and, if necessary, consider modest and appropriate alterations. The building currently houses a theater, apartments, and offices – three uses for which the university continues to have need. This makes it especially hard to understand why the university can not continue to use the building for the exact same uses currently found in it. The university has claimed that the age and structure of the building do not lend it to being upgraded for the new uses they would like to put in there. The university has not demonstrated why this building cannot be upgraded when so many buildings of similar age and vintage have been. More importantly, however, it must be noted that it is choice, not necessity, guiding the university's decision to consider uses for this site for which the university claims this building is not suited, rather than continuing residential, office, and theater uses at the building which are clearly needed by the university and which we all agree are compatible with this historic building.

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation wishes to continue to work with the university on its planning for the future and to find ways to make its needs compatible with those of its neighbors. However, demolishing this building would send an extremely troubling message to all of NYU's neighbors about its genuine interest in doing so, and would damage the chances of success of efforts to see a South Village Historic District designated, particularly in this area east of 6th Avenue.

We are encouraged that NYU has considered not using the entire community facility bulk bonus for the proposed new building at this site, and has employed an architect who has drafted a more sensitive design than many recent NYU developments. However, the simple fact is that this is a site which NYU should be considering for “re-use,” not “new development,” as per the planning principles to which it has agreed. If we were to accept the university’s current justifications for planning to demolish this building, then any older building owned by the university which is underbuilt and may not be suited for certain uses which the university decides it wants to put at that site – regardless of whether or not the current building could be put to productive use – would be considered appropriate for demolition. That is simply not a rationale we can support, nor is it one which we believe is compatible with the planning principles or with the desires and expectations of many of your neighbors.

I hope that the university will be willing to reconsider its plans for the Provincetown Playhouse site. In addition to the loss of this historic building, we are very concerned that such an action would deeply harm the effort to build a constructive working relationship based on trust between the university and its neighbors as the university plans for its future in this community.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Members, Borough President’s NYU Community Task Force