



Far West Village Campaign Goes into High Gear

New Landmark and Zoning Push Follows Initial Victory

(LPC) cataloguing every historic building in the area west of the Greenwich Village Historic District between Horatio and Barrow Streets, the area of the Far West Village we had identified as most vulnerable as well as containing some of the Village's most significant historic structures. This proposal, including over 100 buildings and the streetbeds of two very important historic streets, can be found on our website at www.gvshp.org/protectingFWV.htm, including maps, photos, and historic data. Special thanks go to former GVSHP executive director Regina Kellerman, whose groundbreaking 1986 study, *The Architecture of the Greenwich Village Waterfront*, provided much of the data and grounding for this proposal. The area contains more than 20 early 19th century and 35 late 19th century structures; more than 20 houses and a dozen former stables; four former seamen's hotels and three monumental industrial structures; the last wood frame house built in Lower Manhattan and the site of the invention of the transistor, chain broadcasting, and the

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Three Down, Two on Deck, Eight to Go

Plan to Protect 13 Federal Houses Advances

fragile and class of buildings. That study was continued and greatly expanded by former GVSHP staffer and scholar Susan DeVries. GVSHP members and supporters heeded our call and sent hundreds of letters and e-mails to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) in support of this "13" proposal.

The effort has borne fruit. On June 8th, the LPC voted to landmark three of these houses, 127-131 MacDougal Street, built in 1829. These houses, featured in the Fall 2003 issue of our newsletter (see www.gvshp.org/newscurrent.htm), were of particular concern to GVSHP due to their location, collective formation of a large potential development parcel, and speculation that NYU was seeking to purchase at least one of the houses (GVSHP urged the University not to take any actions which would endanger the houses). The victory was particularly sweet given that these three houses were first

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GVSHP kicked off its campaign to save the Far West Village from inappropriate development at the beginning of this year with three goals: 1) Protect historically and architecturally significant properties in the area through landmarking, 2) Change zoning in the area to prevent out-of-scale new construction, and 3) Overturn a City ruling allowing as-of-right high-rise residential development in manufacturing zones of the Far West Village and elsewhere. Following our victory on the third goal this Spring (see Spring 2003 newsletter at www.gvshp.org/newscurrent.htm or www.gvshp.org/848DOBruling.htm), GVSHP has set its sights upon landmarking and zoning changes to protect the area.

Toward that end, GVSHP has submitted an extremely detailed landmarking proposal to the Landmarks Preservation Commission

In 2003, GVSHP joined the New York Landmarks Conservancy (NYLC) in identifying and calling for the landmarking of 13 unprotected federal-era (1790-1835) rowhouses in Lower Manhattan (see www.gvshp.org/federalrowhouses.htm). There are more than 100 such unprotected houses in Lower Manhattan, and GVSHP began a study in 1995 of these wonderful relics (funded in part by Preserve NY, a grant program of the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts) to protect this invaluable but

57 Sullivan Street, one of 13 vulnerable federal houses proposed for landmarking



Cobblestones At our request, Councilmembers Gerson and Quinn are introducing legislation aimed at protecting historic cobblestone streets; it will require that cobblestones are appropriately restored when damaged or removed, and that removal is a last resort. Currently, lax city regulations often allow historic cobblestones to be unnecessarily removed and replaced in a slipshod manner, or not replaced at all and instead tarred over. The legislation will apply fines for violations. For more info or to support this legislation, check our website for updates or call us at (212) 475-9585.

Still Not a Pretty Picture GVSHp continues to push the city to make sure that three landmarked houses at 305-311 West 11th Street, owned by Annie Leibovitz, are appropriately repaired. Nearly two years ago, GVSHp reported to the city the illegal work by the owner which resulted in the severe damage we still see today. We have since regularly demanded vigorous enforcement action, and when no repairs were made, we picketed the properties on the one-year anniversary of the original work. GVSHp met with the Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair

and staff this summer to convey our extreme concern about the structures' state and the lack of progress on their repairs. The Commission offered a full accounting of repairs underway and planned, and gave an optimistic prediction about their completion by the beginning of fall. GVSHp will continue to monitor the situation with Councilmember Quinn, State Senator Duane, and

305-311 West 11th Street shortly after the original collapse. Two years later, some, but not all, repairs have been made



Assemblymember Glick, and push for full repairs and accountability from the owner. For more info or to help, go to www.gvshp.org/leibovitz.htm.

Fighting Institutional Overdevelopment We continue to push for measures to prevent the overdevelopment of our neighborhoods by institutions, which can build larger than normally allowable buildings under current

regulations. In 2002, GVSHp issued its "After the Kimmel Center" report proposing zoning changes to end this practice (for more information, see www.gvshp.org/afterkimmel.htm); in 2003 GVSHp helped form and lead a citywide coalition to push for such measures; and in early 2004 the City produced its first proposed reforms. Because the measure was extremely limited and offered no real relief to our neighborhoods, GVSHp did not support it. However, at Mayor Bloomberg's August Town Hall meeting in the Village, City Planning Chair Amanda Burden asserted that she was compelled by our report's recommendations

and would work with us, other community groups, and the City Council to produce further legislation to address our concerns. GVSHp intends to work to ensure that this pledge is fulfilled. Councilmember Quinn has agreed to help GVSHp meet and strategize with supportive Councilmembers to produce a proposal with City Planning for long-overdue reform of this system. To support this effort, go to www.gvshp.org/kimmelhelp.htm.

Neighborhood Preservation Briefs

Village Care The Society has been working with neighbors regarding a plan by Village Care of New York (VCNY) to build a large new elder care facility at 54 Downing Street (214 West Houston Street), an area of very distinctive, diminutively scaled historic architecture in our South Village Landmark study area (see page four). The eight-story, 85-foot high building would set back behind a plaza on Downing Street, breaking the streetwall and looming over its largely two-to-five-story neighbors. Special approvals are needed for the large increases in the building's height and size, and while GVSHp respects VCNY's mission and services, there are great concerns about these aspects of the proposal and the precedent they would set elsewhere in the Village. GVSHp is seeking a resolution that will maintain the scale and historic character of this special block, while allowing VCNY to fulfill its mission and site its facilities.

Preserving Historic Church Buildings GVSHp is working with a coalition of organizations trying to ensure the preservation of historic buildings owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of New York. Earlier this year, the archdiocese announced that they are looking to close and sell off several of their Manhattan churches, but have not yet announced which ones. As there are several such historic churches in the Village not protected by landmarking, this is of course a subject of concern. The coalition is seeking to work with the archdiocese and community groups to help ensure that historic structures are ultimately preserved and kept intact wherever possible.

Post-Designation, Now What?

Continuing the Work to Save Gansevoort Market

protect this special area has been won, the war still rages on.

In the newly designated Gansevoort Market Historic District (see map www.gvshp.org/gansmaps.htm), a tremendous number of applications for new projects and proposed changes to existing buildings have been brought to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) since designation. SGM and GVSHP review each individual application, and often lobby the LPC heavily to change proposals we deem

inappropriate for the district. More than a dozen applications have come through the LPC for the area in the year since designation, and while we have supported some plans that were thoughtful renovation designs, we have called for changes -- from minor to quite substantial -- to many proposals. The LPC has listened to and in many cases agreed with our suggestions, illustrating the importance of

remaining vigilant about the proposed new projects and the review process which landmarking offers. SGM and GVSHP have also worked hard to report violations of landmarks law in the area and have them corrected. There have been a tremendous number of such violations in this new district, and we have been aggressive in seeking inspections and adjudication by the City. Finally, SGM is working with the City to pay for and select the placement of the distinctive brown Historic District street signs that will mark the Gansevoort Market Historic District. We expect these signs to be in place in 2005.

Two great outstanding concerns remain regarding the future of the area: the fate of the blocks without landmark protections to the west of

The groundbreaking designation of the Gansevoort Market Historic District in 2003, a campaign spearheaded by our Save Gansevoort Market Task Force (SGM), means that while a critical battle to

the designated historic district (between West and Washington Streets), and the need to maintain and reinforce the historic character of the neighborhood, especially its market character.

In 2002, SGM/GVSHP called upon the City to eliminate hotel development in the area as incompatible with the neighborhood's unique mix, and this Spring, in response to the area's exploding popularity, GVSHP renewed that call and added a request that the City embark upon broader planning for the area. After we twice defeated plans for a 450-ft. tall tower at 848 Washington Street (based on the inclusion of residential development in the plan, currently prohibited by the zoning), this summer hotel developer Andre Belaz announced plans to develop a hotel on the site. GVSHP met with and expressed several strong concerns to the developer about the as-of-right project, including scale, design, and impact on the High Line and area traffic. As planning and design for the project moves forward, Belaz agreed to consider the issues we raised and promised that the building's height

will be significantly shorter than prior plans'. In September, the firm of Polshek Partners, which

Many buildings in the Gansevoort Market Historic District, such as those pictured here, are going through the landmarks review process for permission to alter their buildings

has a long history of preservation-oriented design work and support for Gansevoort Market preservation efforts, was chosen for the project. We have been told

feedback from us and others will be solicited as the design process moves forward.

Finally, SGM has undertaken its "Meat Market Blooms" project, an examination of the possibility of relocating the Flower Market, now being displaced from its lower Midtown home, to the western, undesignated blocks of Gansevoort Market. There are many hurdles to such a possibility, and many factors to weigh. However, such a move would ensure an appropriate and compatible use for this area that would reinforce and add to the market character of the neighborhood, and thus was deemed worth exploring. In May SGM held a gala fundraiser for the effort, and in June hired a consulting team to work with the Flower Market Association in examining the possibilities for a relocation plan to the area. This feasibility study and its findings should be complete this fall and will be shared with the public and the City for further examination of this possibility. This study is being made possible in part by the generous support of the J. M. Kaplan Fund.





Silver Towers Superblock

Pei, Picasso, and the Village's Modern Legacy

Village complex and superblock, bounded by Bleecker, Houston, and Mercer Streets and LaGuardia Place.

Built to the designs of I. M. Pei in 1966 and containing New York's only public outdoor Picasso sculpture (one of only two in the Western Hemisphere), the complex marked a turning point in both Pei's career and in modern architecture. The complex is noteworthy for the sculptural dynamism and technological innovation of its 30-story cast-in-place concrete towers; its integrated response to urban renewal, university redevelopment, superblock planning, and affordable housing mandates; the sensitive interweaving of the layout with the existing streetplan; and the modernist, non-axial central outdoor space circulating around a cubist sculpture. The complex was built largely by NYU, and includes one tower of affordable co-operative housing built to compensate for the prior housing demolished to make way for the development.

After careful study and consultation with the residents of the complex, including City Councilmember Alan Gerson, who is a strong advocate for the effort, GVSHP proposed the complex to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for designation. The proposal has generated a strong showing of support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Municipal Art Society, the American Institute of Architects NYC Chapter, several modern architecture preservation

Though best known for its 19th and early 20th century architecture, Greenwich Village is home to some significant and influential works of modern architecture. One such example is the Silver Towers/University

The I. M. Pei-designed Silver Towers superblock, with modernist landscaping and Picasso sculpture

groups, and State Senator Tom Duane and Assemblymember Deborah Glick. Hundreds of residents and supporters have also written to the LPC in support of designation.

The effort is particularly timely now for two reasons. As is apparent, the complex has aged considerably, and repairs are necessary to maintain the towers' facades and other architectural features; landmark designation would allow LPC to ensure that such repairs are done appropriately, without damaging those features. Also, NYU has announced its intention to develop a large science center on the site of a supermarket in the northwest corner of the complex. Not only could a large-scale development there jeopardize the original design, but the site is just feet from the north facade — and windows — of the residential tower, which NYU was required to erect for Village residents to replace housing lost for the development. Done incorrectly, this development could compromise not only the integrity of the original design but also the livability of the residential co-op — a give-back to the community by NYU forty years ago. For more information and to support this effort, see www.gvshp.org/silvertowerssuperblock.htm.

Historic South Village Project Takes Shape

Vital Area Reveals Historic Patterns and New Threats

GVSHP's Historic South Village Preservation project reaches a new stage this fall as we wrap up the herculean task of researching basic historic data on the 600-plus buildings in our study area (see map at www.gvshp.org/southvillagevirtualtour.htm),

which renowned architectural historian Andrew Dolkart will use to issue a report for GVSHP documenting the architectural and historic significance of the area (with funding provided by Preserve NY, a grant program of the Preservation League of New York State, and the New York State Council on the Arts). This will be followed shortly by a proposal by GVSHP for landmarking and possibly zoning protections for the area, and will be accompanied by lectures, walking tours, and other programming to highlight the historic South Village.

GVSHP's research has already unearthed some compelling and surprising information about the area. Well-known as home to one of the nation's largest Italian-American immigrant communities in the late 19th century, the South Village, we discovered, also contains: a

high concentration of buildings that not only housed Italian-American immigrants but were built and designed by Italian-Americans as well; New York's first Italian parish, established in 1866; and the remnants of some of New York's earliest African-American settlements, upon which much of the Italian-American community was built (St. Benedict the Moor's African Church, for instance, became an Italian parish).

The area's architecture also captures important stories. Tenements designed to house some of the city's poorest residents were nevertheless often designed with richly detailed exteriors of stone, brick, and iron ornament in the latest architectural styles. Older houses were often altered and subdivided in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries to accommodate waves of immigrant families, and then



The Former Circle in the Square Theater at 159 Bleecker Street, before demolition began

often further altered to house artist's spaces in top floor lofts. In the age of the motorcar, stables became residences, and many houses, factories, stables and movie theaters also became experimental theater spaces, as the area became a breeding ground for literary, musical, and counter-cultural innovation in the 20th century. One such example was the Circle in the Square Theater at 159 Bleecker Street. Originally built as a local movie house,

it later became a nightclub and the Amato Opera House, before becoming home to Circle in the Square, the city's first non-profit theater. However, this summer a developer purchased the building and

From the Director

This year marked the 35th anniversary of the designation of the

Greenwich Village Historic District, still one of the largest, most varied, and most cherished historic districts in New York City — or anywhere, for that matter. Next year will mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation in 1980. Both milestones give us pause to reflect upon where our community and our organization have been, and where we need to go.

When GVSHP was founded in 1980, the greatest threat to historic preservation was not from new development but from alterations to and deterioration of existing properties. Twenty-five years later, this is no longer the case. Massive development pressure has transformed much of the unprotected areas of the Village, in many cases in a particularly unsympathetic manner, and it will continue to do so without active intervention. Similarly, we have begun to see that preserving the character of our neighborhoods cannot be accomplished through landmarking alone; zoning is an important tool to help ensure that new development, whether outside of landmark districts or in them, has an appropriate scale and contains appropriate uses. Zoning is also vital to address the institutional overdevelopment our neighborhoods face.

These realities guide GVSHP's direction in the coming year. We have put forward bold landmarking and rezoning proposals for the Far West Village (see page one), the area most immediately threatened by overdevelopment, and we intend to dedicate our resources toward seeking implementation of these preservation measures. We expect to complete the exhaustive study of the South Village necessary to put forward a landmarking proposal for this area, and we'll look at potential zoning changes to preserve the neighborhood's character as well. We're also working with several East Village groups to pursue a similar two-track approach there. And we're working with our allies in city government to advance our proposal for zoning reform to prevent the institutional overdevelopment that our neighborhood faces.

While present and future needs occupy most of our time at the Society, we're also working hard to honor and learn from the past. We've acquired a vast collection of archival materials, oral histories, and photographs documenting our neighborhood and its preservation movements. In the next year we'll be seeking to make these archives broader, more prominent, and easier to use. As our organization enters its 25th year, we intend to make sure that the lessons of the past will not be lost.

Support Preservation: Join the Society

New membership benefits include a 28-page self-guided walking tour booklet of Gansevoort Market; invitations to our many lectures, programs, and walking tours (in many cases free or at a reduced rate); free access to the Society's research sources; regular issues of our newsletter; a free six-month subscription to *The Villager* newspaper. **Most important, your support will make GVSHP a more effective preservation leader.** The Society also invites members to give memberships to friends and neighbors for only \$25. (That's half price!) Please use the form below, and we will send a lovely gift packet, informing the recipient of this thoughtful gift. Give at the \$100 level or above, and you'll receive a free set of Greenwich Village notecards. Give at the \$500 level or above, and you'll receive an invitation to a special thank-you event at a unique Village location.

YES! I will support the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and its preservation work:

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Return this form with your check to **Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, 232 East 11th Street, New York, New York 10003.**

And order these gifts from the Society:

- Discovering Greenwich Village.** A 12-page activity book for children ages seven to twelve. \$3 plus 60-cents shipping.
- The Greenwich Village Waterfront, An Historic Study.** A 46-page booklet. \$5 plus 60-cents shipping.
- Greenwich Village T-shirt.** A white t-shirt with green lettering. GVSHP logo on the front, with a list of famous Village residents on the back. In M, L, and XL (please circle one). \$15 plus \$2.50 shipping.
- Save Gansevoort Market T-shirt.** A white t-shirt with a red Save Gansevoort Market logo on the front. In M, L, and XL (please circle one). \$15 plus \$2.50 shipping.
- Set of Greenwich Village Notecards.** Eight cards and envelopes featuring images from GVSHP's photograph archive. \$8 plus \$1 shipping.
- Greenwich Village Waterfront Poster.** A full-color 16-by-24-inch poster featuring photographs of architectural details from waterfront buildings. \$5 plus \$2 shipping.
- Save Gansevoort Market.** A 28-page walking-tour booklet. Free plus 60-cents shipping charge.

PLEASE NOTE: When you order a gift, please check the box or put in the number of items you want. Write your name and address in the form above if they are different than they appear on your check.

Far West Village

from page one

transatlantic telephone; and Weehawken Street, believed to be the shortest street in New York, and Charles Lane, believed to have the oldest cobblestones of any street in the city. GVSHIP is working diligently to muster support from neighborhood, City, State, and National preservationists and leaders for this proposal, and is urging the LPC to move forward in protecting its historic resources. To support this effort, go to www.gvshp.org/letters4-21-04.htm

GVSHIP has also formulated a proposal to rezone the Far West Village, to ensure that any new development more closely matches the scale and character of the area than many of the recent high-rise, setback tower developments we have seen. This rezoning proposal was submitted to the City in September, with the goals of: 1) reducing the overall bulk of allowable new development, 2) using contextual zoning to impose height limits and require new buildings match the traditional streetscape, and 3) maintain the unique and intimate scale of streets like Weehawken Street and Charles Lane.

Currently, zoning in the Far West Village allows a variety of different types and scales of development. Some of the area allows very large buildings, and none of the area has prohibitions upon either setback towers (which allows new developments to build higher) or accumulating unlimited development rights on one site. Each are ways that very tall towers, like the recent Meier buildings or the Memphis at Charles and Washington, have been built. However, by utilizing contextual zoning, we can ensure that any new development does meet the street (rather than sitting back on a plaza and piling their mass up higher), meets height limits appropriate to the area, and does not take unlimited development rights from other nearby sites, which increases the size and bulk of developments.

GVSHIP Executive Director Andrew Berman and over 120 supporters, including State Senator Tom Duane, rallied at City Hall to call for preservation of the Far West Village



The city is currently analyzing this proposal, and we expect to meet with them soon to develop specific zoning recommendations. While the all-important final outcome remains to be seen, we are happy to report that at Mayor Bloomberg's Town Hall meeting in Greenwich Village in August, City Planning Chair Amanda Burden stated that she looked forward to receiving and working on this proposal, and was positively inclined towards rezoning the area. Her office has been extremely helpful in moving this process along, and we look forward to the results. State Senator Duane, Councilmember Quinn, Assemblymember Glick, Congressman Nadler, and Councilmember Gerson have also supported this effort.

Federal Houses

from page one

heard by the LPC in 1966, but were never designated. On May 18th, the LPC held a hearing on 4 St. Mark's Place in the East Village, another of our 13 federals. GVSHIP and NYLC helped generate a very strong showing in support of designation at the hearing. Designation would not only protect this house, but also add to the very small number of protected sites in the East Village. A vote is expected soon. And on June 21, 67 Greenwich Street, another of the 13 proposed houses, was put on the LPC calendar, the first step towards a hearing.

The remaining houses are still unprotected, however, as are 4 St. Mark's and 67 Greenwich until designation is approved. In a July meeting, Chair Robert Tierney told GVSHIP that the LPC was actively looking at the remaining houses from our proposal, and indicated that further movement could be forthcoming soon. Please thank the LPC for their votes to landmark the 3 federal houses, but also urge them to move forward on the remaining 10; sample letters and contact info are available on our website at www.gvshp.org/macdougalletter.htm. This effort is also supported by State Senator Tom Duane, Assemblymember Deborah Glick, and Councilmembers Christine Quinn, Alan Gerson, and Margarita Lopez.

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The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation was founded in 1980 to preserve the architectural heritage and cultural history of the Village.

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