



# THE ANTHEMION

Spring 2004

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

www.gvshp.org

*In Memory of Freda Fogler*

## Saving the Far West Village and Greenwich Village Waterfront

**G**VSHP has launched a campaign to save the Far West Village from the ever-increasing threat of overdevelopment and destruction of its historic buildings, character, and scale. In light of the imminent danger facing the area, this effort is GVSHP's most urgent priority for 2004.

Late last year, developers demolished the venerable Pathfinder warehouse at Charles Lane and West Street to make way for a third glass and steel high-rise designed by architect Richard Meier. In February came word that the large Superior Ink factory at Bethune and West Street was to be demolished and developed by Related Properties. Several other sites in this unprotected area south of the Gansevoort Market Historic District and east of the Greenwich Village Historic District (roughly the area south of Horatio Street west of Washington Street, and south of Perry Street west of Greenwich Street) also



*The standing-room only crowd at Far West Village Town Hall Meeting in March. City Council Member Christine Quinn and Assembly Member Deborah Glick also spoke.*

appear to be in danger, potentially resulting in further encroachment of grossly out-of-scale new construction, and further destruction of precious, historically and architecturally significant buildings.

*continued on page three*

## GVSHP Defeats 450-foot Tall Goliath

### Lobbying Campaign Wins City Reversal on High Rise Development

**T**he saying goes you can't fight City Hall. But in this case you can, and you can even win.

One of our greatest victories in the past year was designation of a Gansevoort Market Historic District, which will preserve and



*A superimposed image of the proposed 450-foot tall tower in Gansevoort Market. If the City ruling had stood, such towers could have been built not only here, but all along the Greenwich Village waterfront.*

protect the 102 buildings on parts of 11 blocks in Greenwich Village's northwest corner. However, shortly after designation, GVSHP exposed word of a grave new threat, not only to this neighborhood, but also to much of the Far West Village and other neighborhoods throughout the City.

A developer long sought to build a 450-foot tall high rise at 848 Washington Street (at 13th Street) in the Meatpacking District. We were able to defeat this plan because the manufacturing zoning for this area prohibits residential development, requiring the developer to seek a variance, or exception, to the zoning, in order to build his project. Through a broad lobbying campaign, we were able to prevent this variance from being granted. However, the developer then secretly went to the New York City Department of Buildings and got a

*continued on page six*

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

This issue of the Anthemion looks at some big victories and some very serious threats to our preservation efforts. They are two sides of the same coin, however, as the path that led us to these victories shows us how we need to deal with the threats we are facing.

The success in getting the City to completely reverse the Department of Buildings ruling which would have allowed as-of-right high-rise residential development for the first time ever in manufacturing zones (like the Meatpacking District, parts of the Far West Village, and in places like Noho) was an incredible and unqualified victory. This not only effectively put an end to the plan for the 450 foot tall combination hotel/residence at 848 Washington Street (at 13th Street) in the Meatpacking District, but will help in our battles against other potential inappropriate residential development in these other manufacturing zones (see story below left).

This victory did not happen on its own. Our members and supporters heeded our call and flooded the Mayor with a non-stop stream of letters and e-mails on this issue since we first uncovered it last fall. We forged alliances with groups and neighborhoods across the City which also would have been hurt by this ruling, and forged a tightly knit alliance with our elected officials and community boards to fight this. We reached out to and lobbied our friends within the Administration. And our members and supporters turned out in massive numbers for our Town Hall and March to Save the Far West Village, where overturning this ruling was one of three main goals (see article above left).

The formula was not unlike that for our victory in securing the Gansevoort Market Historic District designation. The lesson: the full support and participation of our members is an absolutely essential ingredient to any successful effort.

We must now apply this to the tremendous, and growing, preservation challenges we still face. In the Far West Village, the development

*continued on page two*

continued from p. 1

pressure is astounding: Eight new high-rises in the last 5 years, four more announced or under construction, and another four rumored to be in the pipeline; more and more historic structures being demolished or consigned to huddling in the shadow of out-of-scale new towers next door. And we have important work to do in the South Village, Washington Square, and wherever there is a need for preservation

Because of the tremendous development pressure the Village is facing, this issue of the Anthemion is largely devoted to these battles we are facing, and letting you know how you can help and get involved. I strongly urge you to write to the relevant City officials to let them know how strongly you feel about these issues, and how important it is that they take action to address them.

Convincing the City that preservation is a key to our City's success, not a hindrance, is an ongoing battle we must continue to fight. The urgency appears to be greater than ever now. We here at GVSHP have been overwhelmed by the offers of support and volunteer assistance, which has made our multi-front efforts possible. But more help is needed. More than ever, I ask that you to consider an additional donation of time, talents, equipment, or resources to help GVSHP accomplish these urgent preservation goals. We've won some very important battles, but the war rages on.

*Andrew Berma*

## Save Gansevoort Market Forges Ahead Vital Preservation Efforts Continue After Designation

The designation of a Gansevoort Market historic district in late 2003 meant no rest for GVSHP's Save Gansevoort Market (SGM) project, which spearheaded the successful campaign for historic district designation for this area. Instead, SGM has merely switched gears, now focusing on ensuring that provisions of the historic district designation are enforced, reviewing and responding to proposed alterations and new construction in the district, working to maintain the market uses in the neighborhood, and ensuring that any new development in the undesignated areas of Gansevoort Market maintain compatibility with the district's existing market uses, character and scale.

Immediately preceding and following the designation of the Gansevoort Market historic district, several property owners made changes to their buildings in violation of landmarks law and buildings code rules. These included removal of a characteristic market overhanging metal shed and installation of a billboard at the Gachot Building (440 West 14th Street), and removal of a cornice at the West Coast Apartments. Such violations have a serious impact upon the integrity of a historic district and we are committed to seeing landmarks regulations enforced and the violations corrected. If you see what you believe is a landmarks violation, please report it to us, either by going to our website and clicking on "Reporting Landmarks Violations," or by calling us at 212/475-9585 x38.

We have also been working hard to review and respond to all applications for substantial alterations or new construction in Gansevoort Market. Applicants are asked



*The Gachot Building at 440 West 14th Street is one of the most impressive buildings in the newly designated Gansevoort Market district. SGM is seeking to have the illegal billboard removed and to have the illegally removed metal shed (below billboard) restored.*

to come before a design review committee, and we supply background historic information and, where appropriate, alternative design suggestions to the applicant and the Landmarks Preservation Commission to try to ensure that only the most appropriate and best possible designs are approved.

Finally, SGM is working hard to ensure that the existing meat market uses in the area are allowed to stay, and that the future of the western blocks of the neighborhood (which were left out of the historic district) remains compatible in scale and use with the rest of the Gansevoort Market neighborhood. Toward this end, SGM has been exploring the feasibility of relocating the Flower Market, currently being forced out of its home at 28th Street and 6th Avenue, into Gansevoort Market. SGM has been working closely with the Flower Market Association, local elected officials, Gansevoort Market meatpacking and

*continued on page four*

### "HOW CAN I HELP?"

GVSHP is often asked "I support your preservation efforts -- how can I help?" Some options:

- Making a donation to GVSHP, or giving a gift membership to a friend or neighbor
- Volunteering time at our office or on special projects
- Donation of office equipment or books
- Donation of services, such as web design or p.r. services
- Agreeing to host a meet & greet house party or fundraiser for GVSHP
- Agree to have your house on our annual Benefit House Tour
- Invite GVSHP to come speak to your building, block, or civic association

GVSHP depends upon the generosity of our members and supporters, so please consider helping GVSHP in whatever way you can. To make arrangements or enquire, call 212/475-9585 or e-mail [gvshp@gvshp.org](mailto:gvshp@gvshp.org). □

## FOUNDATION AND GOVERNMENT GRANTS SUPPORT GVSHP

GVSHP would like to acknowledge the very generous foundation and government grants it has received over the last year.

Government funding has come from grants secured by City Council Member Christine Quinn, City Council Member Margarita Lopez, City Council Member Alan Gerson, the Manhattan Delegation of the City Council, State Senator Tom Duane, and Assemblymember Deborah Glick. Government grants have also been received from the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, and the New York City Departments of Cultural Affairs and Youth and Community Development.

Foundation grants include the Kaplen Foundation, the J.M. Kaplan Fund, Preserve New York (a grant program of the Preservation League of NY State and the NY State Council on the Arts), the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, and the NYU T.G. White Fund.

## South Village Project Gains Steam and Support

**G**VSHSP's work to protect the historic and undesignated South Village continues to make great strides. In November, GVSHP received an \$8,000 grant from Preserve New York (a grant program of the Preservation League of NY State and the NY State Council on the Arts) to commission a report and survey of the area's unique architectural and historic features by renowned architectural historian Andrew Dolkart. The report will serve as a foundation for a historic district designation proposal for the area. A large crowd turned out for the announcement ceremony, which also served as a kick-off to this campaign, and a broad cross-section of South Village residents and institutions have already joined this effort.

We expect the report to be finished by the end of this year. To reach that point, however, GVSHP must complete an exhaustive historic survey of every one of the 600-plus buildings in our 30-block study area to provide historic data to serve as the basis for this report. To do this, a team of eight interns has been surveying the area and performing research at various libraries and archives throughout the City. Through this work, an exciting and deeply compelling story is emerging of the history of this long-unrecognized area of Greenwich Village – the architects who shaped its buildings; the immigrants who filled its streets and, in a surprising number of cases, owned and built its buildings; the evolution of buildings from stables and single family houses to tenements and factories and theaters; and the expansion of street and mass transit networks which shaped the South Village's most basic form.

As we move through this wonderful stage of discovery about this area, we are also seeking to share with the public this compelling information and secure further

historic information about the area, as well as securing support for this cause. Toward this end, in November GVSHP launched a "Virtual Tour of the Historic South Village." Viewable on our website at [www.gvshp.org](http://www.gvshp.org), the tour contains scores of photos and troves of historic information about this culturally and aesthetically rich area. The tour is regularly updated as new information and materials are acquired, and through it we have received many offers of photos, documentation, and information about the neighborhood from current and former residents. Additionally, through the Virtual Tour, we have received support for the South Village preservation effort from web surfers from as far away as Australia, building on our ever-expanding efforts to establish a strong foundation for our eventual South Village landmarking proposal.

For more information about the South Village effort, go to [www.gvshp.org](http://www.gvshp.org) and click on "Protecting the South Village." To help, contact GVSHP at [SouthVillage@gvshp.org](mailto:SouthVillage@gvshp.org) or 212/475-9585, x 38.



*(l. to r.) South Village Landmarking Association's David Gruber, GVSHP Executive Director Andrew Berman, and Preservation League of NY State's Scott Heyl, at the South Village kick-off and check-granting ceremony.* □

Saving the Far West Village and Greenwich Village  
*continued from p. 1*

Clearly, there is little time to spare. Thus GVSHP launched a three-pronged campaign to preserve the historic Far West Village. Joined by other West Village groups and Community Board #2, on March 10 GVSHP held a Town Hall meeting to get out the word about the danger we face and our strategy to combat it. An astonishing 400-plus people showed up, demonstrating the deep commitment on the part of West Villagers to fight to preserve this area's special character.

Our campaign sought three critical actions from the City: 1) Landmark and Historic District designation to preserve the historically significant structures which make up so much of this neighborhood, 2) Zoning changes to limit new development to an appropriate scale for this historic neighborhood, and 3) Reversal of a recent City ruling which would allow, for the first time ever, high-rise residential development in manufacturing zones like the Meatpacking district and parts of the Far West Village. GVSHP began lobbying the City on each of these initiatives. The huge turnout at the Town Hall helped propel this movement forward exponentially. Our first step in the campaign was generating letters to the City on each of these three issues. More than 600 letters were written at the meeting alone. Hundreds more have been sent following the meeting, much of it the work of "captains" who signed up at the Town Hall meeting and agreed to spread word of the campaign to their block, building, or e-mail list, and coordinate participation in the effort. This "captain" system is a crucial part of our strategy, and is needed to ensure maximum participation in this campaign. If you would like to volunteer or be a "captain," please contact GVSHP at [gvshp@gvshp.org](mailto:gvshp@gvshp.org) or 212/475-9585 x32 right away.

This was followed by a Rally and March to Save the Far West Village from Overdevelopment on April 18. Hundreds showed up to show their support and send a strong message to the City about our preservation agenda for the Far West Village. Hundreds of postcards were distributed and signed on the spot, and scores more Villagers agreed to volunteer and become "captains" in this ongoing effort. City Hall has clearly taken notice of our efforts – the Department of City Planning has agreed to meet with us and our allies to discuss our zoning concerns, and we have already secured a reversal

# Support Preservation— Join GVSHP



GVSHP led the April 18 March through the streets of the Far West Village. Pictured are (center rear) State Senator Tom Duane, (l.) GVSHP Exec. Dir. Andrew Berman, (r.) City Council Member Chris Quinn, and Katy Bordonaro and Zack Winevine of the Greenwich Village Community Task Force (center front and far r.)

of the Department of Buildings ruling which would have allowed the 450 ft. tall high-rise in the Meatpacking District and potentially other similar development elsewhere in the Far West Village (see article page 1 for details on this victory).

A crucial part of our strategy will also be ongoing and regularly scheduled events to build involvement in this campaign and demonstrate our need for the City to take action to protect our neighborhood.

Our next big event will be a Rally and Press Conference on the steps of City Hall on Sunday, May 23rd at 2 pm meeting. Please be sure to come, and tell friends and neighbors.

A critical part of this effort is our letter writing campaign, which has clearly already had an impact. For sample letters and contact information (if you've written before, please do so again!), and the latest information about this effort, go to [www.gvshp.org](http://www.gvshp.org) and click on "Protecting the Far West Village," or call 212/475-9585.

## Gansevoort Market Update *continued from p. 2*

other businesses, and the local community to see if such a move is possible and desirable. Toward that end, SGM has received a very generous grant from the J.M. Kaplan Fund to commission a feasibility study of the move possibility, which could be used to lobby City and State officials to help facilitate the realization of such a plan. However, more funds need to be raised to cover the costs of this project, as well as the other ongoing work that SGM must do.

To help make this a reality, SGM is holding a fundraiser on Thursday, May 20, at the studios of Diane von Furstenburg on West 12th Street. For information or tickets, contact 212/696-8670 or [sgm\\_flowers@hotmail.com](mailto:sgm_flowers@hotmail.com).

**N**ew 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 at a reduced rate or free); free access to the Society's research sources; regular issues of our newsletter; and a free six-month subscription to The Villager newspaper.

Most importantly, your support will make GVSHP a more effective preservation leader. The Society also invites members to give gift memberships to your friends or neighbors for only \$25 (that's half price!). Please use the form below, and we will send a lovely gift packet, informing them of your 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 historic Village location.

YES! I would like to support the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and its preservation efforts.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Patron | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Sustainer   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Family/Dual      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Sponsor  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Contributor   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Basic/Individual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$_____  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Gift Membership - Special Offer for Current Members to give!<br>(put recipient's name below) |  |

I am already a member, but would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ (please give name below).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

## Order GVSHP Gifts

(put name and address above if different than appears on check.)

- Discovering Greenwich Village* (12 page activity book for ages 7 - 12) \$3.00 + \$0.60 shipping
- The Greenwich Village Waterfront, An Historic Study* (46 page booklet with an overview of Greenwich Village waterfront history) \$5.00 + \$0.60 shipping
- Greenwich Village T-shirt (white with green lettering in medium, large and extra large. GVSHP logo on front, list of famous Village residents on back.) \$15.00 + \$2.50 shipping
- Save Gansevoort Market T-shirt (white with red Save Gansevoort Market logo on front) \$15.00 plus \$2.50 shipping
- Set of Greenwich Village notecards (eight cards and envelopes featuring images from GVSHP's photograph archive) \$8.00 + \$1.00 shipping
- Greenwich Village Waterfront Poster (a full color 16x24" poster featuring photographs of architectural details from waterfront buildings) \$5.00 + \$2.00 shipping
- Save Gansevoort Market 28-page walking tour booklet (free + \$0.60 shipping charge)

Please return this form with your check to:

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

232 East 11th Street New York, NY 10003 (212)475-9585 [gvshp@gvshp.org](mailto:gvshp@gvshp.org)

# What's Wrong With These Pictures?

## 18 Months Later, Properties Still Not Repaired

It is now a full year and a half since illegal work was performed on two houses owned by Annie Leibovitz, compromising the integrity of these two landmarked structures and a neighboring third. GVSHP has doggedly pursued getting necessary repairs made to the properties to prevent further damage to them (in a settlement of a lawsuit with the affected neighbor, Leibovitz purchased the third damaged house), and pushed the City, which had given the celebrity owner no more than a slap on the wrist (two \$500 fines) for the dangerous illegal work which resulted in these conditions and for the failure to restore the buildings expeditiously.



*GVSHP members picketed in front of 305-311 West 11th Street last October.*

The results are less than fully satisfying. Both the City and the owner have regularly claimed that restoration work was about to begin, only to have no progress for weeks or months after. Last October, GVSHP staged a picket in front of the house to call attention to both the owner's and the City's negligence. The demonstration attracted national media attention and a representative of the owner showed up to insist that the beginning of work was imminent.

Instead of repair work, what followed was a reported attempt by the owner to sell the three properties in their damaged form, repairs not done. After this was apparently unsuccessful and the delays met with further protest by GVSHP, some work on the houses began early this Spring. According to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, workers for the owner "have demolished the compromised bearing wall between the two southern houses and are in the process of pouring new foundations and foundation reinforcements, and replacing the bearing wall. Once the structures are stable, exterior restoration should proceed."

GVSHP will continue to closely monitor the situation, push for immediate repair work, and call attention to the egregious flouting of landmarks law by the owner and the City in this case. If you would like to write to the

Landmarks Preservation Commission to urge that they take action to ensure that these landmark houses are restored, go to [www.gvshp.org/leibovitzletters.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/leibovitzletters.htm) on our website for sample letters.

## City's Oldest Cobblestoned Street Under Threat

The City continues to ignore our cobblestoned streets, an irreplaceable resource, and GVSHP continues to push to protect them.

Earlier this year, construction on the third Richard Meier tower at Charles Lane and West Street suddenly resulted in about a third of cobblestones in the lane's western end being removed for the tower's construction. A neighbor reported this to GVSHP right away, and GVSHP immediately reached out to the City to try to prevent further destruction and get the Lane restored. After a considerable runaround, we were informed that the Department of Buildings gave the developer the permit to tear up the street to enable them to lay the foundation for the new building, with no provisions made for preserving the original cobblestones to be returned to the Lane. This is particularly troubling because the stones in Charles Lane appear to be unique in New York – nearly every cobblestone street is actually composed of Belgian Blocks which were introduced in the late 19th century. Charles Lane's stones actually appear to pre-date the introduction of Belgian Blocks, making them perhaps the oldest existing street cobblestones in New York City.

Making matters worse, the Department of Buildings had apparently originally given the developer permission to install a



*Historic Charles Lane's cobblestones were removed for the construction of the third Meier Tower.*

permanent sidewalk in front of his building in what is now Charles Lane (Charles Lane has no sidewalks). Fortunately, following our intervention this permission was rescinded, and the Department of Transportation has agreed to work with the developer to ensure that cobblestones are restored to the Lane.

However, these may not be the original cobblestones, and no system is in place by the City to ensure that when work requires the removal of cobblestones on City streets that they are preserved and returned whenever possible. GVSHP has proposed new regulations and a new system to the City, and is working with City Council Members Gerson, Quinn, and Yassky (of Brooklyn), State Senator Duane, and community groups in Brooklyn and Manhattan to find a way to compel the City to adopt these or other measures to preserve cobblestone streets.

## Washington Square Arch Restored; Hopes High that Park Will Follow

This Spring, the long-overdue renovation of Washington Square Arch was completed, and the monument which has long been a centerpiece of Greenwich Village was re-dedicated and re-opened to the public.

GVSHP is committed to trying to ensure that the tragic situation which we endured for ten years – the Arch literally crumbling and



*Washington Square Arch was finally restored and re-opened this Spring. Sadly, the view through Washington Square Arch, blocked by the new NYU Kimmel Center, may never be restored. The Park, however, awaits its turn.*

fenced off from the public, while repairs were put off – never happens again.

Similarly, GVSHP is dedicated to helping to find a way to restore Washington Square Park, which is sadly quite physically deteriorated as well. GVSHP has been asked to sit on a task force with the mission of helping to secure funding for the park's restoration. Fortunately, several elected officials have committed a considerable amount of funding to the project already, but we still have a long way to go. GVSHP will be working closely with the other involved parties to try to help make a Washington Square Park restoration a reality in the near future. □

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*The GVSHP office can be reached at  
212-475-9585 or at [gvshp@gvshp.org](mailto:gvshp@gvshp.org)  
232 East 11th Street, NY, NY 10003*

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**GVSHP Defeats 450-Foot Tall Goliath**

*continued from p. 1*

ruling that in effect allowed residential development in manufacturing zones without requiring a variance. How? Manufacturing zones do allow hotels, though only transient (short-term stay) hotels, not residential (permanent or long-term stay) hotels. The ruling from the Department of Buildings, which we exposed, stated that a project with as many as 49% of its units serving as permanent, residential units could be built in a manufacturing zone, as long as the rest of the project was a transient hotel and the entire project was called a hotel. This ruling suddenly opened all of our manufacturing districts, including a chunk of the Far West Village, to high-rise development.

Because the Landmarks Preservation Commission did not include the 848 Washington Street site in the Gansevoort Market Historic District (in spite of our urging them to do so), the proposed 450 foot tall residential and hotel tower could have been built at this site if this ruling stood. Worse, the ruling would allow similar development in any light manufacturing zone in New York City, including the Meatpacking district west of Washington Street, the Superior Ink site at West Street and Bethune Streets, and most of the Far West Village south of Barrow Street. Making matters worse, even if a developer did not want to build a 51% hotel/49% residential project at these locations, this ruling would have made it significantly easier to get a variance or zoning change to allow a 100% residential development. How? Allowing the developer to argue that they are already allowed to build a roughly half-residential project by law under current zoning, thus minimizing the degree of

'variance' or zoning change they are requesting.

In response, GVSHP and our Save Gansevoort Market project led citywide opposition to this plan and called for the Mayor to overturn this inappropriate and outrageous ruling. In addition to generating hundreds of letters from Villagers and preservationists against this ruling, we reached out to groups and elected officials across the City to join us in our fight. We asked every Community Board in New York City to call for the ruling's reversal, reached out to City Council Members from across the City, enjoined business and community groups in the Meatpacking District and in other waterfront manufacturing areas to join us, and got the support of several unions and the New York Industrial Retention Network. We worked closely with elected officials like City Council Member Quinn, State Senator Duane, Congressman Nadler, Assemblymember Glick, and Councilmembers Gerson and Yassky.

After months of non-stop lobbying, and two days after our "Save the Far West Village" March and Rally, the City announced that it was completely reversing this ruling, and would no longer allow as-of-right residential development in manufacturing zones as part of this hotel loophole.

This tremendous victory is a stake in the heart of the 450-ft. tall tower plan, and a significant help for the rest of our preservation efforts in the other parts of the Village. More than anything, however, it shows that the letter-writing and organizing and lobbying which GVSHP's members do can make a difference – in this case, a big difference we are all the better for. □



GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY  
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

232 East 11th Street  
New York, NY 10003  
212 475-9585  
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