



Greenwich Village

SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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Village Group Hails Reversal of City Ruling It Fought Which Would Have Allowed Hi-Rise Residential Development in Manufacturing Zones



GVSHP was founded in 1980 to preserve the architectural heritage and cultural history of the Village



“A Stake in the Heart of the 450-foot tall Tower Planned for the Meatpacking District”

Manhattan — The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP) hailed a dramatic reversal by the City today overturning a [Department of Buildings ruling which would have allowed as-of-right high-rise residential development in manufacturing zones](#) like the Meatpacking District and parts of the Far West Village. The group’s Save Gansevoort Market (SGM) project had spearheaded a campaign to overturn a ruling issued last year at the request of a developer of a proposed 450-foot tall tower at 848 Washington Street in the meatpacking district. The area’s manufacturing zoning prohibits residential development, and the group successfully fought an attempt by the developer to get a variance allowing the residential use for the tower in early 2003. However, then the developer [secured a ruling from the Department of Buildings](#) stating that since hotels are allowed in manufacturing zones, they would allow the development to be 49% residential units, as long as the remaining 51% were hotel units.



A superimposed image of what the 450-foot tall tower would have looked like in Gansevoort Market

The “51/49” ruling, as it came to be known, was fought vociferously by GVSHP because it would have allowed residential development in manufacturing zones in sensitive areas like the Meatpacking district and the Far West Village, areas which GVSHP was very concerned about allowing inappropriate development ([click here](#) for additional info). The concern was especially great in areas like the Meatpacking District, where multi-million dollar condos were proposed directly across the street from dozens of meatpacking businesses which it was feared would ultimately be pushed out by the new residents who would inevitably complain about the noise, smell, and traffic generated by the businesses. Because other areas of the Far West Village are also zoned for manufacturing, there was a great fear that this would suddenly open the floodgates to residential high-rise development throughout the low-rise, historic area. GVSHP organized a

broad campaign to get the City to overturn the ruling, which included a letter-writing campaign among Village residents which generated several thousand letters, postcards, and e-mails to the Mayor on the issue, intensive lobbying by allied elected officials including City Council Member Christine Quinn, State Senator Tom Duane, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, and Assembly Member Deborah Glick, and organizing a citywide coalition of groups representing manufacturing neighborhoods throughout the city which lobbied the Mayor against the ruling. Allied unions, including Local 342 of UFCW, which represents meatpacking workers, also organized in the [letter-writing campaign](#) organized by GVSHHP for its workers, and dozens of meatpacking businesses as well as other businesses organized letter-writing campaign coordinated by GVSHHP.

“This is a tremendous victory for us and for preserving the vitality of the Meatpacking District and protecting the Far West Village from inappropriate development,” said GVSHHP Executive Director Andrew Berman, who led the campaign to overturn the ruling. “I am glad that wiser heads prevailed at City Hall and intervened to reverse this ruling,” he added, referring to the initial response by Department of Buildings Commissioner Patricia Lancaster vociferously defending the ruling last year when GVSHHP called for its reversal. “Our coalition of elected officials, community groups, businesses, unions, workers, manufacturers, and just plain average citizens really won the day, showing you can fight City Hall and win. This is a stake in the heart of the plan for the 450-foot tall tower in the Meatpacking District,” Berman said.

On Sunday, hundreds of Village residents marched through the streets of the Far West Village protesting the overdevelopment of their neighborhood and proposed developments such as 848 Washington Street in a demonstration led and organized by GVSHHP. Thousands of postcards were distributed and mailed in at the demonstration asking Mayor Bloomberg to overturn the DOB 51/49 ruling, and to protect the rest of this neighborhood. This followed a standing-room only Town Hall meeting in March sponsored by GVSHHP organizing residents to fight this ruling and fight for zoning changes and landmarking protections for their neighborhood which would protect against this and other kinds of inappropriate development. GVSHHP and SGM had led the [successful effort to get the Gansevoort Market Historic District designated in 2003](#) which protected much of the Meatpacking District from overdevelopment but excluded the 848 Washington Street development site, much to the group’s chagrin. While development may still take place on this site, the ruling ensures that it cannot be residential development, the main impetus behind the 450-foot tall tower plans.

“This is a tremendous boost to our efforts to preserve the Meatpacking District and the Far West Village,” said Berman. “Had this ruling stood, you would have seen dozens of these ‘51/49’ hotel/residential high-rises in our manufacturing zones, pushing out businesses and destroying neighborhood character. And it would have given a boost to those who would have sought to get variances or zoning changes to allow 100% residential uses by claiming that they were allowed to built partly residential already. This is a great victory for businesses and neighborhoods, and anyone who cares about maintaining the integrity of our zoning and planning process,” he added.

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