



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

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October 23, 2009

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan
Chair, NY Board of Standards and Appeals
40 Rector Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: BSA Calendar # 314-08-BZ, 437-447 West 13th Street

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

I write to express the continued unequivocal opposition of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation to the granting of variances to allow increased bulk or size of retail space at the above-referenced location. While the applicant has reduced the degree of increased bulk requested since this item was first heard, we believe the application still does not meet the required findings to justify these variances which, if granted, would still have a negative impact upon neighborhood character.

As stated at prior public hearings, we do not believe that this applicant has established that there is a hardship to be overcome here. Other property owners in the vicinity have built as-of-right without any variances or additional bulk, in spite of similar on-site conditions and challenges. The opening of the High Line Park since this application was first submitted only shows the great advantages this property owner enjoys due to the proximity of this property to the High Line, rather than the hardship which is claimed. It also shows the sensitivity of this resource, especially to shadowing, which would be increased by the requested bulk variances.

In addition to the High Line Park, the surrounding neighborhood would be negatively impacted by the requested variances. The scale and relative openness of the Meatpacking District is a defining characteristic, and anything which increases the scale of buildings or diminishes the sense of openness erodes the character of this neighborhood. Additionally, this neighborhood is defined by small-scale retail and ground-floor commercial uses, not the type of big-box space this owner is seeking. Allowing such a large retail space would not only fundamentally alter the character of the neighborhood, it would have the potential to greatly impact traffic patterns and impacts in this area.

I thus strongly continue to urge you to reject the requested bulk and use variances for 437-447 West 13th Street.

Sincerely,

Andrew Berman
Executive Director