



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

252 East 11th Street
New York, New York 10003

(212) 475-9585
fax: (212) 475-9582
www.gvshp.org

Executive Director
Andrew Berman

President of the Board
Mary Ann Arisman

Vice-Presidents
Arthur Levin
Arbie Thalacker
Linda Yowell

Secretary/Treasurer
Katherine Schoonover

Trustees
John Bacon
Penelope Bareau
Elizabeth Ely
Cassie Glover
Jo Hamilton
Thomas Harney
Leslie S. Mason
Ruth McCoy
Florent Morellet
Peter Mullan
Andrew S. Paul
Cynthia Penney
Robert Rogers
Jonathan Russo
Judith Stonehill
Fred Wistow
F. Anthony Zunino III

Advisors
Kent Barwick
Joan K. Davidson
Christopher Forbes
Margaret Halsey Gardiner
Margot Gayle
Elizabeth Gilmore
Carol Greitzer
Tony Hiss
Martin Hutner
James Stewart Polshek
Elinor Ratner
Henry Hope Reed
Anne-Marie Sumner
Calvin Trillin
Jean-Claude van Itallie
George Vellonakis
Vicki Weiner
Anthony C. Wood

TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN OPPOSITION TO INTRO. 623 REGARDING THE ALLOWANCE AND LICENSING OF ADVERTISING SIGNAGE ON SIDEWALK SHEDS January 26, 2009

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify this afternoon. My name is Andrew Berman, and I am the Executive Director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the largest membership organization in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. I am here today to urge you not to support Intro. 623.

Sidewalk sheds are already an enormous problem in our neighborhoods. Too often they are blights, sheltering waste and inhospitable conditions. They are often poorly lit and maintained, and even in the best of conditions block pedestrian flow, dampen retail activity, and loom over our sidewalks and streets. Sidewalk sheds are without a doubt a necessity in many circumstances, and the negative impacts of a well-maintained sidewalk shed is the price the public must pay for safety in these circumstances.

However, one of the most serious and pervasive problems with sidewalk sheds is that too often they remain up for much longer than necessary. Often they are kept up as a substitute for doing necessary work, or remain up while work is halted for long periods of time or even after it has been completed. We have noticed this to be especially true when there is advertising signage on these sheds, generating substantial income for the building owners. It is our well-founded fear that allowing advertising signage on sidewalk sheds will only exacerbate this problem, encouraging sheds to remain up for even longer than they currently do, extending those unnecessary, negative impacts.

Additionally, we have concerns about the expanded allowance for advertising signage in our neighborhoods. Much of lower Manhattan, even those neighborhoods which are substantially or predominantly residential, is zoned C or M, and thus would be affected by this legislation. There is no lack of advertising signage in these areas, both legal and illegal, and I am not sure that more billboards are what they need. While we understand that the bill before you would only allow advertising signage in districts where it is currently allowed anyway, this bill would extend that allowance to the entire length of a sidewalk shed, to a height of as much as 8 feet and in many cases the length of an entire blockfront. It is hard not to imagine that the result will be a noticeable increase in advertising signage in our neighborhoods, and its further encroachment into the public space of sidewalks and city streets, as opposed to on buildings and private property where it is currently allowed.

We believe Intro. 623 is ill-considered, and urge you not to pass it.