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Preservation

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May 31, 2016

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
NYC Landmarks Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: 46-74 Gansevoort Street, Manhattan

Dear Chair Srinivasan,

We have reviewed the revised application for 46-74 Gansevoort Street. While we were pleased to see that the applicant met the LPC's request to lower the height of the building at No. 50 Gansevoort Street, we were deeply troubled that they did not follow the LPC's clear direction for No. 60-68 and No. 70-74 to follow historic precedents for the heights of the new buildings. Further, in light of the new application, we feel strongly that the hearing should be re-opened in order that the public may speak to the controversial and flawed assertions in this proposal.

The tenements at No. 60-68 were built in 1879 at 55 feet high, per NB 627-1879. Of the nineteen alteration permits found dating from 1908 to 1939 for these buildings, eighteen of them recorded heights between 50-55 feet and one recorded two of the buildings at 58 feet. The current application selectively chooses just one of these early 20th century permits which describes the height of the buildings as 58' "from curb level to highest point," but nevertheless chooses to ignore even this height and argues instead that the historic height is 61'11", seemingly based on a study of historic joist heights. Because new evidence is clearly going to be presented at the upcoming public meeting and it cannot be gleaned with certainty from the application, we feel it is imperative that the public be given an opportunity to respond. Therefore the hearing should be re-opened. Nevertheless we argue firmly that as per the feedback provided by the Commission at the previous hearing, a total building height of no more than 50-55 feet should be allowed here.

At No. 70-74, the LPC requested that the applicant look to loft buildings in the historic district for reference in determining the appropriate height for the new building at this location. Per my letter dated February 17, 2016, our research on loft buildings in the district demonstrated that the heights of the buildings ranged from 39 to 74 feet, with an average height of 56.5 feet. We are perplexed as to why the applicant disregarded the LPC's instructions and looked to warehouse buildings in the district instead, except perhaps as a way to further push the height envelope for this development. Here too the public deserves an opportunity to hear and respond to the applicant's full argument and presentation. We nevertheless argue strongly that based upon the feedback by the LPC at the prior hearing, a building of no more than approximately 56.5 feet should be allowed at this location.

As you know, this is a deeply controversial proposal, broadly opposed by the surrounding community. While we disagreed with the Commission's assertion that pre-existing buildings on this site and other types of buildings served as suitable models for new construction on these sites, we nevertheless accept the LPC's judgment

in these cases. However, to allow the applicant to then twist and circumvent even that very generous directive would be an outrageous abridgement of the public's trust and a blow to the integrity of this process. I urge you in the strongest of terms to hold firm to the Commission's previous feedback and not approve the proposed changes to 60-68 and 70-74 Gansevoort Street.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

cc: Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
City Council Member Corey Johnson
State Senator Bard Hoylman
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Community Board 2, Manhattan
Historic Districts Council
New York Landmarks Conservancy
Save Gansevoort