



GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

300 ft. Tower Planned For University Place

*GVSHP Responds With
Landmarking & Rezoning Plans*

When GVSHP learned that 110 University Place at 12th Street, the home of Bowlmor Lanes, was purchased by a developer, we reached out to urge him to pursue only a contextual development for the site. The area lacked landmark protections, thus allowing demolition of the existing building, and the zoning encouraged tall, out-of-scale towers. The zoning does allow a developer to maximize the number of developable square feet if the new development is kept low and in context, which GVSHP encouraged him to do, but regrettably it does not require such an approach.

Then this fall GVSHP's daily monitoring of demolition and permit applications for our

neighborhood revealed plans filed for a 308 ft. tall residential tower on the site. The Society again reached out to the developer urging him to reconsider his plans, and asked local elected officials to do the same. Unfortunately, the developer refused.

This highlights the frustrating lack of landmark protections and appropriate zoning for the University Place and Broadway corridors, and their potentially disastrous consequences. Demolition of almost any building in the area is allowable, regardless of architectural or historic significance, and new development of 300 feet in height or even greater is possible. GVSHP has long called attention to this situation, but the City has never moved to make any changes.

In response, GVSHP is drafting potential rezoning and landmarking proposals for the area. Toward that end, we held a standing-room only community meeting in December to discuss a possible "contextual" rezoning proposal we drafted to limit the size and height of new development in the area. We also discussed possible landmarking proposals based on research conducted by GVSHP, which would protect historically and architecturally significant buildings in the area from demolition or inappropriate alteration. It would also subject new development or additions to public hearings and approval by the Landmarks Preservation

Commission, with only those deemed "appropriate" to the character of the area receiving permits.

GVSHP will also thoroughly scrutinize any final permit applications for new development on this site, to ensure nothing is approved that zoning and other regulations do not allow. However, given the permissiveness of the zoning regulations for this area, this is not likely to yield a substantial change in the planned development.

Rezoning and landmarking both require strong support from affected stakeholders, and GVSHP is working hard to build that consensus. So far we have received much positive feedback from residents and elected officials, and we are seeking to further build consensus with an on-line survey and community board public hearing.

These measures also require approval by the City, which takes many months, usually years. Thus while rezoning or landmarking proposals are highly unlikely to affect the planned development at 110 University Place, they could affect other future plans in the area. Without changes, more towers 300 feet or taller could be erected, containing hotels or dormitories, not just residences. Preventing this is a top priority for GVSHP. See gvshp.org/univpl for more info or how to help.



An image of the approximate size and massing of the planned new tower on the Bowlmor site.

Plan To Purge Scores of Potential Landmarks Dropped

City Scheme Opposed by GVSHP Lacked Public Input, Transparency

In late November, GVSHP became aware of a plan by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to ‘de-calendar’ en masse ninety-four individual sites and two districts proposed for landmark designation throughout the five boroughs. Under the unprecedented scheme, all these sites, which were still on the list of those formally under consideration for potential landmark status (or ‘calendared’), would be removed without any public hearing or even consideration of their individual merits. Once removed from the list, all sites would lose any protection from possible demolition or alteration that their current status affords (demolition or alteration permit applications for calendared buildings are referred to the LPC for forty days, during which time the Commission can landmark the property or negotiate a change in or withdrawal of the application by the owner).

GVSHP opposed the plan for many reasons. First, the process was deeply troubling—no public hearing would be offered to allow commentary on any of the sites or districts, and there would be no debate regarding the merits of any of the specific sites. There would simply be an up or down vote by the Commissioners on whether or not to de-calendar all the sites en masse.

Second, the ninety-four buildings and two

districts included four buildings of special interest to GVSHP. Two were early 19th century Federal-style houses proposed for landmark designation by GVSHP and the NY Landmarks Conservancy, one in the South Village and one on the Lower East Side. Another was an early 19th century Federal-style house on Second Avenue in the East Village proposed for landmark designation in 2009 by the very Landmarks Preservation Commission now

against the plan, urge the Mayor to intervene (the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission and all its members are appointed by the Mayor), and explore legal options should the plan be approved. We met with senior staff at the Commission to let them know how strongly and fundamentally we opposed the plan, while offering to work with the Commission to find more appropriate and transparent ways to clear out their backlog



(l. to r.) 57 Sullivan Street, 2 Oliver Street, 138 Second Avenue, and 801-807 Broadway—just four of the nearly one hundred sites the Landmarks Preservation Commission planned to ‘de-calendar’ en masse.

proposing to ‘de-calendar’ it (GVSHP and fellow preservation organizations had supported landmarking this structure). And the fourth was the 1868 cast iron former McCreery and Co. Dry Goods Store at 801 Broadway/67 East 11th Street, which was not only one of the grandest stores of Gilded Age New York, but one of the very first cast iron loft buildings legally converted to residential use in New York. The building was first considered for landmark designation in 1966. GVSHP felt strongly that all four buildings in our area merited continued consideration for landmark status.

GVSHP worked in coalition with fellow preservation groups to mobilize the public

of sites such as these which were previously considered for landmark designation but for which no final action had been taken.

In the face of this opposition, just days before the planned vote the Commission withdrew the proposal. However, the plan could return in similar or modified form. GVSHP is working with fellow preservationists and elected officials, led by the Manhattan Borough President, to come up with an alternative plan, and to look at other reforms to the Commission’s practices which could improve the way the agency handles these and similar issues. See gvshp.org/decalendar for more info.

East Village Preservation Progress Continues

Synagogues Saved, Markers Mounted, Dorm Plan Halted

GVSHP helped score a preservation victory nearly a half century in the making in October when the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) landmarked **Tifereth Israel Synagogue at 334 East 14th Street**. The distinctive onion-domed stone structure was built in 1866 as a German Baptist Church, later serving as a Ukrainian Autocephalic Church before becoming a synagogue, reflecting the shifting tides of immigration in the East Village and on the Lower East Side.

Perhaps more remarkably, Tifereth Israel was first ‘calendared,’ or formally considered for landmark designation, in 1966, but for reasons no one seems to recall, a vote on whether or not to landmark the site never occurred. Thus the synagogue remained in “landmarks limbo” for nearly fifty years, until 2013 when GVSHP became aware that the building was being advertised for sale. In response the Society, joined by fellow preservation groups, waged a campaign to get the LPC to re-open the case and finally vote to designate the one hundred fifty year old structure. Our successful campaign resulted in a new hearing in late 2013 and the unanimous final vote to landmark the building this fall.

GVSHP and our partners at the Two Boots Foundation also marked two treasured East



Tifereth Israel Synagogue

Village sites in 2014 with historic plaques. In June we placed a plaque on the home of **New York School poet Frank O’Hara at 441 East 9th Street**, just west of Avenue A. The acclaimed writer was known as a deeply personal poet, and did much of his best work while living on East 9th Street, referencing in his works St. Brigid’s Church across Tompkins Square and local bars and stores.

In October, we placed a historic marker on the site of the **former Fillmore East at 105 Second Avenue at 6th Street**. From 1968 to 1971, Phil Graham’s East Coast outpost was one of the premier venues for live music, hosting greats from the era including The Doors, The Who, Led Zeppelin, The Grateful Dead, and Janis Joplin. The Fillmore East also pioneered the psychedelic light show, and we were

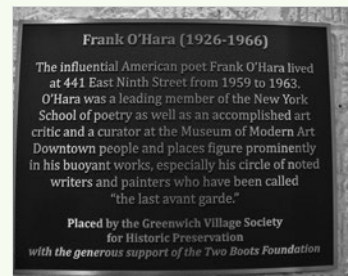
proud to have Joshua White of the Fillmore’s Joshua Light Show speak at our plaque unveiling, along with renowned musician Lenny Kaye, who spoke and performed.

We also scored an important victory this past fall at the landmarked **former P.S. 64 at 605 East 9th Street** (at Avenue B). Working closely with Councilmember Rosie Mendez and other elected

officials, the Community Board, the East Village Community Coalition and other local groups, we got the City to overturn a decision by the Department of Buildings to



At the Fillmore East plaque unveiling ceremony (l. to r.), GVSHP Exec. Dir. Andrew Berman, musician Lenny Kaye, and Two Boots’ Phil Hartman.



Frank O’Hara historic plaque.

grant permits for a large dorm here that violated strict rules governing the permitting of such facilities—rules which we had fought for years earlier. We are now working together to see this valued neighborhood landmark, which for more

than two decades housed the beloved Charas-El Bohio Cultural Center, returned to a true community use.

In 2008 and 2010, GVSHP and our allies got “contextual” rezoning for nearly the entire East Village, limiting the size and height of new development and eliminating incentives for dorm and hotel development. In 2013 we helped secure landmark designation for two historic districts in the East Village, protecting more than 350 buildings on more than a dozen blocks, and we helped secure landmark designation of more than a dozen individual sites in the neighborhood. In the year ahead, we intend to put forward additional proposals for landmark and historic district designations in the neighborhood, to further recognize and protect its rich and varied historic and cultural heritage.

West Village/Meatpacking District Spotlight

*Some Big Wins Scored,
But Even Bigger Battles Loom*

Much of the West Village and Meatpacking District enjoy landmark protections and/or restrictive “contextual” rezoning, thanks in part to measures GVSHP fought for. But vigilance and a strong response are still required when troubling development proposals emerge.

For example, in 2013 an application was filed for a variance to allow a 34% increase in the size of a planned glass office tower at **40-56 Tenth Avenue at 13th Street**. The developer claimed to suffer a “hardship” due to landfill under the site and the High Line above a portion of it, saying it made profitable development under existing zoning impossible. GVSHP vigorously opposed this, and in mid-2014 the variance was finally rejected.

In December we scored a victory when much of the **block bounded by 14th and 15th Streets, 9th and 10th Avenues was rezoned** to impose height limits for new development where none previously existed. GVSHP fought for this rezoning, an earlier version of which allowed much larger development, which we successfully opposed.

The rezoning is critical because several out-of-scale developments are planned for the block, and 2013 state legislation allowing the transfer of air rights from the Hudson River Park would have permitted even more massive development here (the rezoning in effect blocks the transfer of air rights to these sites).

Another important air rights victory came this past summer when Governor Cuomo dropped a

plan to allow the **transfer of Hudson River Park air rights from Pier 40** (at Houston Street) to allow a massive development at the neighboring St. John’s Building without any public review or approval. GVSHP strongly opposed the plan, mobilizing our membership against it. Now City and State officials, the Hudson River Park Trust, and the St. John’s Building’s owners are working on a new proposal to allow air rights transfers from Pier 40 that would go through a fuller city public review and approval process. While such a plan might generate revenue for the park and create affordable housing, it could also result in a massive development on this four block long site. GVSHP is closely monitoring the situation.

This past summer the beloved **“Cobble Court” house at 121 Charles Street** (Greenwich Street) was advertised for sale as a “blank development slate” for \$20 million, creating a huge public outcry. But in fact the house lies within the Greenwich Village Historic District, and thus no changes, much less new development, are possible without a rigorous public review process and approval by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) as “appropriate” for the historic



121 Charles Street

district. Though moved here from Yorkville in 1967, GVSHP believes the house is an integral part of the Greenwich Village Historic District, and should remain so. No applications for changes have been filed, and may not be

for some time, if ever. In the meantime, GVSHP researched and released a comprehensive history of the 200 year old wooden house and its journey to Greenwich Village, to document

and affirm its significance, should it ever be questioned.

The parking garage at **11-19 Jane Street** was sold in late 2014 for \$26 million, and also advertised as a potential development site. The garage also lies within the Greenwich Village Historic District, and thus any new development here would require the same public review and approval process, and be held to the same standard of “appropriateness” for the historic district. The LPC could entertain a demolition application for the utilitarian structure, though none has yet been filed. As with all landmarks applications, GVSHP will notify the public of any filings through our landmarks application webpage, gvshp.org/lpc, through our e-mail list, and through social media. We will inform the

public of the scheduling of hearings and how to submit testimony, and advocate for appropriate outcomes in each case.



11-19 Jane Street

Finally, a row of 1970’s townhouses at **151-157 Charles Street/8A-F Charles Lane** (West/Washington Streets) were marketed in late 2014 for

development. In 2005 GVSHP got a contextual rezoning for this site and much of the Far West Village. Here we argued successfully that the proximity to Charles Lane called for the most restrictive zoning in Manhattan, limiting new development to only about three times the number of square feet found on the zoning lot—a remarkably low density for Manhattan. The prior zoning allowed more than double that size of development and had no height limits; the same zoning on University Place has resulted in plans for a 300 ft. tall tower (see p.1). Thankfully, now only an exponentially more modest development can be built here.

Updates: South Village and NYU 2031 Lawsuit

Steps Forward and Back In Fights for the Heart of the Village

Preservation of the South Village and stopping NYU's massive twenty-year expansion plan remain top priorities for GVSHP. Both have made great progress, but have faced some serious hurdles too.

South Village

In 2006, GVSHP submitted its proposed South Village Historic District to the City, encompassing about 750 buildings on more than 30 blocks south and southwest of Washington Square. The proposal gained widespread support, and the City initially reacted



Elected officials and NYU faculty joined GVSHP for a rally this fall urging the courts to uphold our victory in the NYU case.

positively, promising to consider the entire proposal, albeit in phases. Phase I was landmarked in 2010, while Phase II was begrudgingly landmarked by the City in late 2013 only after their hand was forced as part of a deal to rezone nearby Hudson Square. The two landmark designations are the largest expansion of landmark protections in Greenwich Village since 1969.

However, since then, the City has balked at landmarking the third phase of GVSHP's proposed district, the area south of Houston Street, and removed a row of 1840's houses on Houston Street between MacDougal and Sullivan Streets, adjacent to MacDougal-Sullivan Gardens, from the Phase II

designation. This row and the entire area south of Houston Street remain vulnerable to demolitions and out-of-scale new development.

In addition to pushing for the Phase III landmarking, GVSHP proposed a "contextual" rezoning of much of the South Village in early 2014, which garnered widespread support from elected officials, the Community Board, and community leaders. Thus far, however, the City has refused to consider the

proposal, which would put in place reasonable height limits for new development and eliminate the incentive for constructing dorms and other university facilities.

The City's refusal to move ahead swiftly on these proposals is particularly troubling given that they are hard at work on a plan to upzone the nearby St. John's Building site, to allow massive new development there far in excess of what current rules allow. GVSHP is working with local elected officials and the community board to hold the City's feet to the fire and get them to act upon these vitally necessary preservation measures for the South Village. See gvshp.org/sv.

NYU Lawsuit

In January 2014 GVSHP and our co-plaintiffs scored a huge legal victory when NY State Supreme Court Justice Donna Mills ruled in our favor in our lawsuit against the NYU 2031 plan. She agreed with our contention that the City acted illegally in giving public park space to NYU, and in doing so made it impossible for much (or, by some arguments, all) of the NYU plan to proceed.

Following this legal victory, GVSHP and our co-plaintiffs reached out to NYU and the City to urge them not to appeal the decision and to instead start a new public process for considering their growth needs that would truly reflect and incorporate the concerns of the surrounding community. Both the City and NYU refused, instead appealing the decision. In October, the First Department of the NY State Appellate Division unfortunately agreed with NYU and the City

and reversed the prior decision. GVSHP and our co-plaintiffs have now appealed that ruling to the State's highest court. A decision could come any time in 2015.

Through our opposition to the NYU plan, we were able to get a planned 400 ft. tall tower on Bleecker Street eliminated, and the entire plan reduced by about 20%. However, the massive twenty-year, two million square foot project would still have a devastating impact upon our neighborhood, and fails to consider alternative locations which could be considerably better for NYU, the City, and certainly for our neighborhood. GVSHP will continue to fight this plan until we have exhausted all avenues available to us. See gvshp.org/nyu.



Small Business Preservation

GVSHP has focused growing attention on the plight of small, independent businesses in our neighborhood, which are increasingly threatened by rising rents and chain stores. This fall, GVSHP launched its “Business of the Month” program to highlight, celebrate, and help assist such stores. Anyone can nominate a local “Business of the Month” at gvshp.org/smbus, letting us know what makes it special or unique. Each month’s selection is featured on our blog, website, social media, and e-mail newsletter, reaching tens of thousands of people. The program underscores what makes each business so valued and distinctive, and we hope will increase support and patronage, thus aiding our local small businesses’ health and viability.

This past summer GVSHP also hosted a packed panel discussion focusing on restaurant preservation. Panelists included real estate industry experts, food writers and critics, and academics, discussing some of the many beloved food institutions in our neighborhoods we’ve lost of late, and examining the causes of those losses and possible solutions. GVSHP is also working with fellow community groups across the city to explore zoning and legislative solutions which might help preserve our local businesses and prevent the proliferation of chain stores.



Affordable Housing

In September GVSHP, The New School, the Historic Districts Council, and more than two dozen community co-sponsors convened a standing-room only panel discussion about the city’s affordability crisis and its relationship to historic preservation. GVSHP invited leaders in government, affordable housing creation, and academia to participate. The forum was sparked in part by the Real Estate Board of NY’s (REBNY) groundless but insistent campaign to paint historic preservation as a



(l.) A recent ‘Business of the Month,’ (r.) panelists at our affordable housing program included Borough President Gale Brewer (far r.) and City Councilmember Rosie Mendez (to her left).

cause of our city’s affordability crisis. GVSHP decided to let the experts, rather than REBNY, speak to the issue.

The unanimous sentiment was that preservation was not in fact an impediment to affordability, and notable examples of the two working hand-in-hand were highlighted. In fact, panelists pointed out the irony of REBNY claiming to advocate for affordable housing, when for decades they have invested heavily in influencing the State Legislature to prevent any meaningful affordable housing reforms from being enacted. The informative forum was live-broadcast on the web, and is part of GVSHP’s ongoing campaign to refute the real estate industry’s outrageous but well-funded efforts to undermine landmark preservation.

LGBT History

GVSHP continues to work towards recognition of the plethora of sites in our neighborhoods connected to great strides in the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) civil rights movement. In June GVSHP co-sponsored a storefront exhibition along Christopher Street entitled “Stonewall 45,” highlighting the history of the LGBT rights movement and the street’s special role in relation to it. Dozens of businesses participated, helping to educate the public while also attracting foot traffic to local businesses during LGBT Pride activities.

GVSHP has also been participating in an effort spearheaded by the National Parks Conservation Association to pursue a first-ever National Parks Service Historic Site or District dedicated to the LGBT civil rights movement, centering around the Stonewall Inn and Greenwich Village. Similar

sites and districts have been established throughout the country dedicated to other civil rights and social movements.

And GVSHP continues to push the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to finally formally recognize and protect sites like the Stonewall Inn (53 Christopher St.), the birthplace of the modern LGBT rights movement, and Julius’ Bar (159 W. 10th St.), the oldest gay bar in New York City and the site of the first planned civil disobedience for LGBT rights. GVSHP met with the LPC Chair to urge action on this and other high-priority items. The new Chair has assured us that she is considering taking some action, but has not yet committed to specifics or a timeframe.

From the Director

It's all too easy to be aware of the painful losses and inappropriate new construction we see in our neighborhoods—they stare us in the face every day. What's easier to overlook are the losses that were prevented, and the projects which were improved, as a result of hard work and vigilance.



Recent developments discussed in this newsletter provide ample examples. Without landmark protections, a beloved centuries-old farmhouse in the West Village might have been demolished, while a Jane Street parking garage would likely be replaced by a faceless high-rise, rather than new construction being subject to public hearings and a design review. As a result of zoning changes, a potential development on Charles Lane which might have been another looming tower will instead likely be townhouses. And were it not for tighter regulations for which we fought, a treasured former community center in the East Village might now be a “dorm-for-hire.”

Our neighborhoods face nearly unprecedented pressure for change, and not all of it is good. But it's important to remember just how much of an impact we can have, and to celebrate the difference we have been able to make in preserving and protecting our cherished historic neighborhoods.



Acknowledgements

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We also wish to acknowledge the support of City Council Members Rosie Mendez, Margaret Chin, and Corey Johnson, State Assemblymember Deborah Glick, and GVSHP members.

GVSHP Bulletin Board

Join our e-mail list for alerts on critical preservation and development issues—[gvshp.org/](mailto:gvshp.org)email.

Save the date: our Annual Benefit House Tour is **Sunday, May 3rd**.

Help the cause by volunteering—go to gvshp.org/volunteer.

Buy the Book! *Greenwich Village Stories* is a love letter to Greenwich Village and East Village featuring recollections by sixty-six artists, writers, and neighborhood icons, along with dazzling photos and artwork. All proceeds support GVSHP. See gvshp.org/gvstories.

Visit GVSHP's blog *Off the Grid* for fun and fascinating glimpses into our neighborhoods' hidden history, eye-catching architecture, and colorful characters—see gvshp.org/blog.

Get with the Program! See our upcoming lectures, book talks, walking tours, and panel discussions at gvshp.org/programs; view videos of past programs at gvshp.org/pastprograms.

Want to know about landmarks applications in your neighborhood? View proposed changes to landmarked building in the Village, East Village, Meatpacking District or NoHo; see when hearings and votes will take place; learn how you can testify or affect the outcome; and sign up for alerts about the status of the application—go to gvshp.org/lpc.

Planned Giving—make a legacy gift to GVSHP. Call **212/475-9585 x39**.

Did you know? Every day GVSHP monitors all 6,500 buildings in our neighborhoods for new building, alteration, or demolition permits, and all 3,000 landmarked structures for any proposed major changes.

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