

NEWS VILLAGE PRESERVATION

GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

WINTER
2021 NEWSLETTER

CITY'S SOHO/NOHO UPZONING PLAN ENDANGERS HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS EVERYWHERE

VP LEADS FIGHT, PRESENTS COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVE REZONING PLAN

After intense lobbying during the COVID-19 pandemic by real estate interests and groups they back, in late 2020 Mayor de Blasio announced a proposal to upzone SoHo and NoHo. This would allow development in these neighborhoods of up to nearly two-and-a-half times the size current rules permit, and huge big box chain stores. The proposal directly contradicts promises made not only by the City but Councilmember Margaret Chin and Borough President Gale Brewer, co-sponsors of the process which led to the rezoning proposal, about transparency and public consultation, as well as the supposed purpose of the year-long SoHo and NoHo "envisioning" process. The plan also contradicts the preponderance of public feedback throughout the prior public

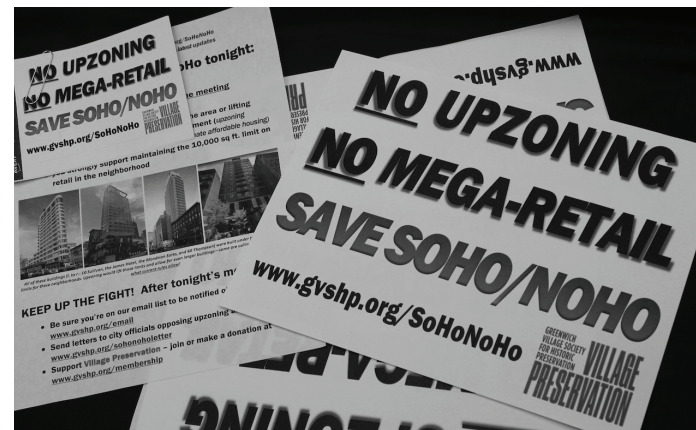
process, in which "No Upzoning" and "No Mega-Retail" were the constant mantras by local residents, led by Village Preservation. The plan would lead to an unprecedented upzoning of historic districts, allowing vastly increased size and scale of new development, and help push out longstanding businesses of the types we want to encourage. It would also lead to the demolition and compromise of historic structures, and help push out remaining tenants in affordable housing in the area, while allowing a flood of luxury condo development and mega-chain store proliferation.

Village Preservation has been working in concert with other community and preservation groups in leading the pushback against the plan, demanding it not move forward without full public participation and analysis, which is not being done. We've also been joined by a dozen local community groups in presenting a "community alternative" zoning proposal which would address the need for affordable housing in the neighborhood and updated rules regarding retail spaces, while continuing to limit new development to the size current rules allow, and continue the current restriction on very large "destination retail" in the area.

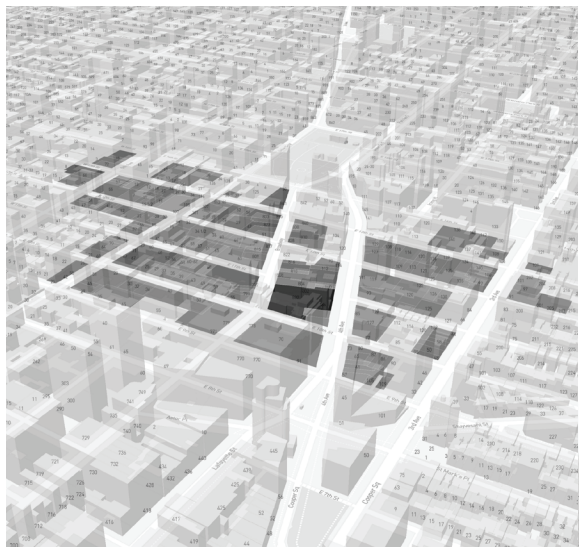
Fighting the city's SoHo/NoHo upzoning plan

is a top priority for the organization right now. If approved, it would facilitate the destruction of the scale and character of neighborhoods which are part of our catchment area. Even more disturbingly, the Mayor and candidates running to replace him have made clear that they see this as the first step towards similar upzonings of other centrally located historic neighborhoods throughout New York City, including Greenwich Village and the East Village.

To find out more and help, go to villagepreservation.org/sohonoho.



POSTERS BY VILLAGE PRESERVATION PROTESTING THE CITY'S SOHO/NOHO REZONING PLAN AT A JANUARY 2020 "ENVISIONING" MEETING FOR THE HOTLY DEBATED INITIATIVE.



CITY STORY #SOUTHOFUNIONSQUARE

Film Tour

By Village Preservation - Oct 20, 2020

841 Broadway

2014



OUR SOUTH OF UNION SQUARE VIRTUAL MAP FEATURES OVER 30 DIFFERENT TOURS EXPLORING THE HISTORY, CULTURE, AND PEOPLE THAT SHAPED THE VITAL AND UNPROTECTED AREA.

SOUTH OF UNION SQUARE HOTEL SPECIAL PERMIT PLAN DEFEATED

BUT BATTLE CONTINUES FOR NEEDED LANDMARK PROTECTIONS

We scored a victory this past fall when the city's plan to rezone the area south of Union Square to require special permits for new hotels was withdrawn in the face of broad opposition led by Village Preservation. We still have a long way to go to win the landmark protections needed for this vulnerable section of Greenwich Village and the East Village (roughly 3rd to 5th Avenues, 9th to 14th Streets), though we made great strides in garnering support and documenting the undeniable significance of this area.

The rezoning plan was a product of the sorely lacking deal between Councilmember Carlina Rivera and Mayor de Blasio to allow the upzoning for the 14th Street Tech Hub, which has increased development pressure on this neighborhood, accelerating the already alarming rate of demolitions and out-of-

scale new development in the area. In spite of her campaign promise to only approve the Tech Hub if it came with comprehensive neighborhood protections to mitigate the effects of the upzoning, Rivera approved it with little more than a vague promise to consider some sort of unspecified zoning 'protections' for the area.

Those 'protections' turned out to be a proposed zoning change which would do nothing to stem the demolitions of low-rise, historic, or residential buildings in the neighborhood or the inappropriate scale of new development. According to the city's own analysis, it would only make the source of new demolitions and development more likely to be office towers rather than hotels. Presented as a response to neighborhood concerns about overdevelopment, we made clear that this Rivera/de Blasio plan did nothing to fulfill the Councilmember's campaign promise or her obligation to the community she represents, while also pointing out the massive flaws and discrepancies in the city's required environmental analysis, forcing them to make embarrassing corrections. We secured unanimous opposition to the plan from local community boards and the Borough President, and from every person who testified at the City Planning Commission hearing. In November, the city finally formally withdrew the plan.

Concurrently, we continued to push for the real landmark protections this area needs and Councilmember Rivera promised but failed to provide. Our research established the extraordinary significance of the roughly 200 buildings in the area, particularly in relation to civil rights movements, the arts, publishing, and commerce. We secured support for designation from City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, the NAACP, the National LGBTQ Task Force, scores of prominent academics and writers, as well as thousands of New Yorkers who wrote city officials in support of landmark designation. We launched our South of Union Square Virtual Map and Tours to share this compelling history with the public, and make lobbying in support of preserving the area as easy as possible. Since the launch, the site has received tens of thousands of visitors, and generated thousands of messages to government officials in support of preserving the area.

In 2021, securing landmark designation for this area remains a top priority for Village Preservation. See villagepreservation.org/unsqso for more info.



17 E. 13TH STREET WAS WHERE FEMINIST WRITER ANAIS NIN MADE GREAT STRIDES IN ART AND LITERATURE.

VICTORY: AIR RIGHTS TRANSFER FOR ST. MARK'S OFFICE TOWER DEFEATED!

VILLAGE PRESERVATION CONTINUES PUSH FOR EXPANDED EAST VILLAGE LANDMARK PROTECTIONS

This fall we secured a big victory when we defeated an application to transfer air rights from the landmarked 1832 house at 4 St. Mark's Place (which we got landmarked in 2004) to a planned office tower at 3 St. Mark's Place (at 3rd Avenue), which would have made it 20% larger than zoning allows. But the application illustrates ongoing threats to the neighborhood and a lack of adequate protections which we're fighting to remedy.

To build the planned office tower, a developer demolished several structures

at the corner of St. Mark's Place and Third Avenue, often referred to as "the Gateway to the East Village," including a ca. 1830 historic house at 1 St. Mark's Place which had long been a symbol of the East Village. He then sought to secure approval for the transfer of several thousand square feet of development rights or "air rights" from the landmarked 4 St. Mark's Place across the street, with a promise to use the funds to conduct restoration work on the historic structure. But Village Preservation pointed out that much of the restoration work originally proposed had already been done or was unnecessary, and that only about 5% of the proceeds from the air rights sale would go towards maintaining or restoring the landmark building.

Most importantly, office towers don't belong on St. Mark's Place, and they certainly shouldn't be 20% larger than the already very generous zoning allows. We rallied neighborhood residents, community groups, and preservationists against the plan, winning strong opposition to the proposal from the local community board (twice) and elected officials. Unfortunately, the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the City Planning Commission, both

controlled by the Mayor, approved the plan.

Our ace in the hole was the City Council, which also had to approve the plan. We spent the better part of a year urging local City Councilmember Carlina Rivera to reject the application, generating thousands of letters to her and her Council colleagues in opposition.

When the application finally came to the Council this fall, Rivera voted against it, and as is standard practice, the rest of the Council joined the local Councilmember in rejecting it, ending the air rights plan.

We're continuing the fight to prevent more of these kinds of demolitions and new developments. We're fighting for zoning changes that would not encourage office tower construction in this area. And we've proposed and are fighting for expanded landmark protections for the East Village, so more historic buildings in these neighborhoods like 1 St. Mark's Place can't be destroyed.

For more information, see villagepreservation.org/3stmarks.



(L.) 1 ST. MARK'S PLACE. PAINTING BY PATRICIA MELVIN. (C.) 4 ST MARK'S PLACE. (R.) THE PLANNED OFFICE TOWER AT 3 ST. MARK'S PLACE WITH THE ADDITIONAL AIR RIGHTS WHICH WERE NOT APPROVED.

HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST

USING SOCIAL MEDIA, SIGNAGE, VIDEOS, AND LEGISLATION TO SAVE LOCAL SHOPS

Among those hardest hit by COVID-19 and the shutdown have been local small businesses, many of whom were already struggling even before the pandemic. Village Preservation has been working to help these vital institutions in a variety of ways, from various media campaigns to help promote them, to assistance navigating government bureaucracies, to helping to lead a campaign for legislative relief.

Helping local small businesses has long been a top priority for Village Preservation. We celebrate and promote them through our Business of the Month and Annual Village Awards programs, and have led efforts to help them stay in their spaces at reasonable rents via the Small Business Jobs Protection Act. With the special challenges they faced this past year, though, we multiplied those efforts.

We launched our “Small Business Thrive in Landmarked Neighborhoods” video series in 2020 and continued to add new businesses throughout the year, showing great local shops with unique character and products, and how the special character of historic neighborhoods are a boon to these independent businesses, and vice-versa. Shared on social media and through our email list, those videos reached thousands of new and potential customers to support these businesses.

This fall, in partnership with a dozen local small businesses, we launched our “Small Business/Big History” signage program. We created signs illuminating the history of the building, street, or area in which the shop is located, along with historic images, which are display in store windows. Through social media and our email list, we encourage the public to visit the stores – both to patronize



A HIGHLIGHT FROM OUR “Small Business/Big History” Signage Map. (L.) A 1940 TAX PHOTO OF 201 BLEEKER STREET. (R.) THE BUILDING’S CURRENT TENANTS.

good local small businesses, and to learn more about local history. We’ve reached over 15,000 people with this program.

When COVID-19 hit, we reached out to small businesses throughout our neighborhoods to offer referrals and assistance, to help connect them to government programs and organizations helping with pandemic response. We also took on a lead role in

supporting the ‘Save Our Storefronts’ state legislation (Hoylman/Epstein), which would provide rent relief to both pandemic-affected small businesses and property owners. We generated thousands of letters to state legislators in support of the legislation, which has gained multiple sponsors since its introduction.

We’re taking a neighborhood approach as well. We have been fighting to get zoning regulations that would limit chain store proliferation in the East Village, which if successful we hope to see replicated in Greenwich Village and elsewhere. And we are fighting the city’s rezoning plan for SoHo and NoHo, which they have made clear they want to implement elsewhere, and which would encourage the spread of giant big box chain stores.

As we (hopefully) move towards a COVID recovery, we need an all-hands-on-deck approach to helping protect and preserve small businesses. More at villagepreservation.org/smallbiz.



OUR DECEMBER 2020 BUSINESS OF THE MONTH “HOUSE OF OLDIES” AT 35 CARMINE STREET.

GOING (EVEN MORE) VIRTUAL DURING THE PANDEMIC

NEW AND GREATER RESOURCES HIGHLIGHT NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

Expanding our virtual resources, to allow the broadest possible audience to learn about and help protect the special architectural and cultural heritage of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo, has long been a top priority of Village Preservation. By necessity, during the pandemic that process has accelerated dramatically, with many of those new resources remaining as permanent fixtures.

The biggest change has been the introduction of our new website, at **villagepreservation.org**. It's an easier to navigate and more nimble online resource, with literally thousands of pages of information and images about our neighborhoods. Designed in a clear and simple format, it makes finding information and getting involved easier than ever.

We introduced some great new resources too. To celebrate the centennial of the 19th Amendment, we released a StoryMap telling the stories of more than two dozen people, places, events and organizations found in our neighborhoods that made significant contributions to the struggle for women's suffrage and equality. In November

we introduced the Village Preservation 40th Anniversary StoryMap, highlighting four decades of our organization's growth and preservation battles in our neighborhoods, from helping to restore historic buildings after devastating fires, to securing landmark protections for over 1,250 buildings and zoning protections for nearly 100 blocks.

We also launched our South of Union Square Virtual Map and Tours, with nearly 40 tours, and histories and historic images of 200 buildings. This online tool allows you to explore the area through themes including civil rights, great writers, artists, and publishers, architectural highlights, great hotels and innovations in housing, the Civil War, and historically significant families who played important roles in the area's development, such as the Roosevelts and the Stuyvesants. We also introduced a new podcast focusing on the cultural history of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo, and a series of bicycle video tours of the neighborhood which asked the question, "If Jane Jacobs were alive today, where would she bike?"

Existing programming went virtual too, including our Annual Meeting and Village Awards, and all of our programming since March. While we mourned the loss of seeing everyone in person, the virtual format allowed more people than ever to participate, and enabled us to bring in lecturers from across the country and world who previously would not have been available for our programs. As a result, we reached nearly 10,000 people -- more than ever before -- over this past year.



RICK KELLY OF CARMINE STREET GUITARS PROVIDED AN ORAL HISTORY ABOUT HIS LIFE AND BUSINESS IN GREENWICH VILLAGE.

We also translated our Adult Continuing Education and Children's Education programs into a virtual format, with new challenges and opportunities. We were able to bring experts to our classes who might previously have been unable to participate, and for the first time could share our Children's Education Program with families and students outside the classroom. We added a wonderful new collection of images from the 1940s and 50s by *Life Magazine's* Jean Polacheck to our Historic Image Archive, as well as three wonderful new oral histories, with Carmine Street Guitars owner Rick Kelly, renowned food writer Mimi Sheraton, and Village Halloween Parade co-founder and puppeteer Ralph Lee. More at **villagepreservation.org/resources**.



OUR INTERACTIVE 19TH AMENDMENT CENTENNIAL STORYMAP HIGHLIGHTS OUR NEIGHBORHOODS' IMPACT ON THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT. ABOVE, JOURNALIST LOUISE BRYANT, WHO LIVED ON PATCHIN PLACE.

IN BRIEF



THE ORIGINAL 367 FT. TALL TOWER PLAN FOR 14-16 FIFTH AVENUE.

14-16 FIFTH AVE. TOWER PLAN TO RETURN

We've lead opposition to the plan to demolish the 170 year old houses at 14-16 Fifth Avenue (now joined as a single apartment building) and replace them with a tall tower. The plan first appeared in 2017 for a 367 ft. tall tower, which received vociferous pushback from us and others. It then disappeared, and re-emerged in late 2019 as a 244 ft. tall tower. While shorter, it still included demolition of historic buildings in a landmarked district, and a proposed replacement four times the height of the average building on the block, and 75% taller than the average building on lower Fifth Avenue in the Greenwich Village Historic District. We staged a huge rally last winter attended by elected officials opposing the plan, which went dormant again.

Now there's word that the tower plan will return in early 2021. At press time there were no details

on the new proposal, or if there are any changes. Public hearings through the Landmarks Preservation Commission process will be required, for which we will mobilize the public in force.

NEW NEIGHBOR THREATENS MERCHANT'S HOUSE

A new version has emerged of a proposed new building at 27 East 4th Street, next door to the Merchant's House Museum. Though previously approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the prior version failed to win needed zoning approvals from the City Council in 2018. The new version, an 8-story building replacing a 1-story garage in the NoHo Historic District Extension, needs no zoning approvals, and is scheduled to go before the Landmarks Preservation Commission in early January.

The new construction presents a unique danger to the adjacent 1832 Merchants House, a rare interior and exterior landmark which is also a treasured public educational resource. Work could cause irreparable harm to the historic interior details of the Museum, as well as undermining its structural integrity. The City has an obligation to maintain the safety and security of this vital public asset, and we'll be working closely with the Museum to ensure no construction takes place next door which jeopardizes it.

WEST VILLAGE LANDMARKS APPLICATIONS PUSH BOUNDARIES

We took a lead role in pushing back against troubling applications for changes to landmarked buildings in the Greenwich Village and Gansevoort Market Historic Districts. At 351-355 West 14th Street/44-54 Ninth Avenue, we confronted a plan to demolish all but the facades of nine highly-altered 19th century rowhouses, and erect a glass



ORIGINAL PROPOSED PLAN FOR 351-55 WEST 14TH STREET/44-54 NINTH AVENUE.

and steel office tower in the rear yard behind them. Ultimately the developer was required to maintain a much larger portion of the historic rowhouses and to restore them (a plus), though a glass and steel structure was approved for the rear yards behind, albeit at a smaller scale and with a more contextual design than originally proposed.

At 65 Horatio Street, a new owner proposed a large rooftop addition and street level wall that would block the view of a rare open side yard and side bay window on one of the most unique houses in the Greenwich Village Historic District. We fought hard against this proposal, gaining results which were mixed at best. The Landmarks Preservation Commission allowed but slightly lowered the height of the view-obscuring wall, and required changes to the proposed rooftop addition, but not nearly enough from our perspective to adequately respect the house's integrity and special qualities.



65 HORATIO ST. AND THE ORIGINAL PROPOSED ADDITIONS.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

ANDREW BERMAN



No doubt this past year has been extremely challenging. We've lost friends, loved ones, and treasured local businesses. We've had to find new ways to engage our members, the public, funders, and decision makers. And much about the future of our city is up in the air right now.

As always, some in big real estate and government have sought to exploit this situation

to their advantage. A massive, precedent-setting upzoning was proposed for SoHo and NoHo at the height of the pandemic, claiming such changes were needed to secure our neighborhood and city's future, while making clear that such changes would be replicated in other historic neighborhoods if successful there.

But Village Preservation has risen to the challenge, and I'm proud to say our members and supporters have too. We're doing more than ever to help local small businesses, and creating more programming and reaching more people than ever to grow appreciation of the irreplaceable history and culture of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. During this time, thousands of you have used tools we have provided to reach government officials to support preservation policies and oppose inappropriate development.

And we're taking the lead in fighting today's critical battles – creating a community alternative proposal to the city's SoHo/NoHo rezoning plan, opposing wrongheaded applications with troubling broader implications for new developments on Lower Fifth Avenue, next to the Merchant's House, and throughout our landmarked districts, from West to East. And we're leading the charge for expanded landmark protections in vulnerable areas of Greenwich Village and the East Village.

Your support makes this all possible. Thank you, and best wishes for a safe and healthy 2021.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We also gratefully acknowledge in-kind support from 632 On Hudson, the Brant Foundation, Carole Teller, Cherry Lane Theatre, Doyle Partners, the Estate of Fred W. McDarragh, Fany Gerson, Indoor Thunder Machine, Karen Lashinsky, La Newyorkina, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, Salmagundi Club, SergeAudio, Veselka, and The Whitney Museum of American Art.

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SEE THE LATEST APPLICATIONS FOR CHANGES TO LANDMARKED PROPERTIES in our neighborhoods, and hundreds of past applications, at villagepreservation.org/lpc.

VISIT OUR BLOG OFF THE GRID for fun and fascinating glimpses into our neighborhoods' hidden history, eye-catching architecture, and colorful characters—see villagepreservation.org/blog.

GET WITH THE PROGRAM!—See all our upcoming lectures, book talks, panel discussions, and other programs, as well as thousands of videos and pictures from past programs, at villagepreservation.org/programs.

EXPLORE hundreds of sites on our Civil Rights and Social Justice Map of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo; thousands of then and now photos and hundreds of sites of historic significance on over two dozen tours on our Greenwich Village Historic District Map and Tours; and the history of every one of over 3,000 buildings as well as over a dozen themed tours on our East Village Building Blocks site: all at villagepreservation.org/resources.

PICTURE THIS—donate your old photos of our neighborhood to our historic image archive, or explore the more than 2,300 images we currently have at villagepreservation.org/imagearchive.

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