

News from VILLAGE PRESERVATION

GREENWICH
VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
WINTER 2024

BATTLE OVER 32-FT.-TALL 5G TOWERS BEGINS

Process Starts to Try to Site Massive Metallic Structures in East and West Village

The process has begun to seek to site the first of thousands of 32-ft.-tall metallic 5G towers on sidewalks throughout New York City, with several of the first batch planned for our neighborhoods. Some will include large video screens similar to the WiFi kiosks currently found on city streets.

Village Preservation and fellow preservation organizations have pushed back on this plan, and the company siting the structures has been forced to undergo a Section 106 historic preservation review to examine potential negative impacts of the towers on historic resources. Village Preservation has been named a “consulting party” to the process, meaning we are notified when an application for one of these towers has been filed in our neighborhoods, and we are invited to submit comments about their potential

impacts on historic resources and urge the public to do the same. We’ve vigorously exercised our right to participate in that process.

As we go to press, applications have been submitted to place these towers at 445 West Street, in front of Westbeth (a local, state, and national landmark); in front of 771 Greenwich Street, aka 99 Bank Street, an 1890 loft building within the Greenwich Village Historic District; at 100 Horatio Street, just across from both the Gansevoort Market and Greenwich Village Historic Districts; in front of 100 Jane Street on cobblestoned West 12th Street, also across from the Greenwich Village Historic District; and in front of 184 East 7th Street, an 1899 Neo-Renaissance-style tenement near Tompkins Square.

We’ve succeeded in getting the tower planned for 445 West Street near Westbeth in the West Village eliminated. We continue to fight the remaining ones that have been filed and are carefully monitoring for

more filings; we will notify the public about these updates and encourage their joining in our efforts to oppose them.

MORE INFO villagepreservation.org/5g-towers



EXISTING 5G TOWER AT 191 AVENUE A (ABOVE AND LEFT).



EXTRA-TALL TOWER, NO GUARANTEED PERMANENT AFFORDABILITY, PROPOSED FOR 388 HUDSON STREET

Village Preservation Calls for Right-Sizing, Guarantees of Permanent Affordable Housing

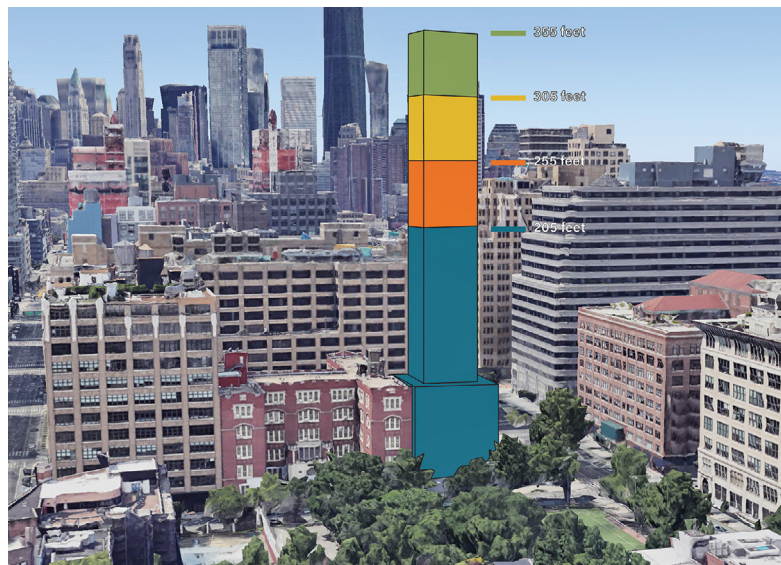
This September, neighborhood residents were shocked to discover that the City's plan to develop affordable housing at 388 Hudson Street (at Clarkson Street), on a vacant City-owned lot used to construct a water tunnel underneath, was envisioned as a tower of up to 355 ft. tall — the tallest tower ever built in Greenwich Village — and would not provide guarantees that the housing remain affordable in perpetuity. Revealed at a “public visioning” meeting, the City's draft plans ignored the extensive public feedback they had received to keep the building as low and bulky as possible, setting back only from adjacent JJ Walker Park to minimize shadows.

2 At the meeting, City officials claimed that only a tower configuration was possible for the development. Perhaps even more disturbingly, upon questioning, they claimed that the affordable housing would not be required to be permanent, and the longest term of affordability they could require was 30 years. This is incredibly valuable public land, which had been originally earmarked for a public park — developing it for anything

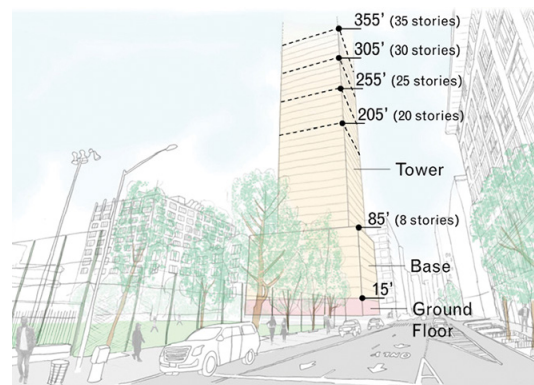
less than permanently affordable housing would be a betrayal of the public trust.

Village Preservation immediately notified the public about this distributing information, generating over 1,500 letters to City officials calling for elimination of the tower configuration in favor of a lower, bulkier building, and demanding a guarantee of permanent affordability for the project. In response, the City hedged, changed their story, and obfuscated. They claimed the tower configuration was not finalized, though it was the only option presented at the “public visioning” meeting for comment, and originally said that this was the only arrangement possible. They changed their description of the required term of affordability for the development from 30 years to “generally in the range of 40–60 years,” without offering any documentation or information to substantiate how those requirements would work (which still would not mandate permanence regardless).

The good news is, instead of issuing a request for proposals for the development this fall as they said they would, the City has paused in light of the backlash over the plans they have presented. We fully expect plans for the site to re-emerge; when they do, we intend to fight as needed to ensure they are for a development that guarantees 100% permanent



THE LATEST PROPOSAL FOR THE SITE WILL TOWER OVER THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD (TOP), UNLIKE THE STRUCTURE SHOWN IN CITY PRESENTATIONS.



affordability for the site, utilizes a configuration that maximizes housing while minimizing height and shadows on JJ Walker Park, and eliminates the costly, inefficient tower plan shown. We are also pushing to ensure potential versions of the design shown that would be all glass or have fortresslike walls with narrow punched windows are eliminated, and an appropriate design that harmonizes with its surroundings is chosen.



OUR PLAN FOR A MORE EFFICIENT, AFFORDABLE, AND HARMONIOUS BUILDING AT 388 HUDSON.

'CITY OF YES' MAY STRIP ZONING PROTECTIONS, EXPAND 'AIR RIGHTS' TRANSFERS ACROSS NEIGHBORHOODS

Village Preservation has been on the front lines responding to Mayor Adams' sprawling "City of Yes" proposal, which would transform rules regarding development in myriad ways and across every corner of the city. Some of the proposed changes are innocuous or even beneficial; some would have no effect on our neighborhoods. But some would significantly loosen development rules in our neighborhoods in ways that would be harmful and unnecessary.

One key area of concern of ours is the proposal to strip away many hard-fought-for zoning protections we've secured for our neighborhoods over the years, which limit the size and height of new developments. The

plan would loosen these limits considerably, even for purely market-rate (i.e., luxury condo) developments, which there is no need to allow in larger amounts in our neighborhoods.

Another is the proposal to allow "air rights" from individually landmarked buildings — of which there are scores in our neighborhoods — to be transferred over much larger areas, and with much less oversight than now required (very limited transfers are currently allowed with strict public review). We believe that such overly generous allowances would be harmful to our neighborhoods and encourage out-of-scale development. The plan is in its very initial stages of public review.



MORE INFO villagepreservation.org/affordability-and-preservation

CITY CONTINUES TO FAIL TO PROTECT HOMES AND HISTORY FROM DAMAGING CONSTRUCTION

This December, dozens of residents of 642 East 14th Street, an 1890 Queen Anne-style building designed by prominent architect George F. Pelham, had to be evacuated from their home as construction work

next door damaged and endangered their building. Residents had complained for months about the impact of the work, and questioned the City allowing the neighboring development to grow more than 50% larger than normally allowed via a special City approval.

Unfortunately, this story remains all too common. At 10 Fifth Avenue, dozens of tenants were similarly evacuated after work from a City-approved tower nearby (specially approved over our objections in a landmark district) damaged their historic landmarked building. And at 14-18 Gay/18-20 Christopher Streets, five 200-year-old landmarked

buildings have been allowed to decline to a precarious condition, while illegal work at one, 14 Gay, led to the City declaring it unsafe and ordering it demolished.

All these cases share a few things in common: an utter failure by City agencies to prevent this destruction, and a complete lack of accountability for those responsible — among owners and public officials — for the damage. Village Preservation has been waging a campaign to get the City to reform its oversight system for monitoring construction and other building work. So far they have only issued a vaguely worded "plan" to protect "vulnerable buildings" that offered almost no specifics or commitments. Clearly this is completely insufficient, and we continue to demand real reform.



642 EAST 14TH STREET (LEFT) AND 18-20 CHRISTOPHER STREET.

MORE INFO villagepreservation.org/reform-landmarking

131 CHARLES STREET BARELY AVOIDS DEVASTATION, AGAIN

This October, Village Preservation successfully lobbied for the third time against the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) approving a disturbing and potentially dangerous plan to alter and excavate under 131 Charles Street, an individually landmarked, perfectly intact, 1834 Federal-style row house, and its 19th-century carriage house, which served as the longtime home of photographer Diane Arbus at the height of her career. While each iteration of the plan to dig and build beneath the structures and alter and add to them have been scaled back in their scope, the latest version still contained troubling elements that would compromise and potentially harm this and neighboring historic landmarks.

This doubly landmarked pair of structures (Village Preservation got them included in the Far West Village Historic District in 2006; they were individually landmarked in 1966, among the city's very first landmarks) are exactly why landmark protections exist, and what they are meant to preserve. A new owner, who purchased the properties knowing full well the restrictions attached to them, is proposing absolutely unnecessary changes to and expansions of the buildings to suit his whims, regardless of the damage to the integrity of these buildings they might inflict. It has taken tremendous effort to get the LPC not to accede to these wishes — an



131 CHARLES STREET (LEFT) AND ITS CARRIAGE HOUSE.

indication of the precarious state of affairs at the Commission these days. Village Preservation will continue to argue for these rare and fragile buildings' preservation, and to mobilize the public to advocate for it.

4

MONITORING REZONING FAILURES IN SOHO/NOHO/CHINATOWN

Village Preservation led efforts to fight the 2021 SoHo/NoHo/Chinatown Upzoning + Displacement plan, pointing out the many lies and inaccuracies in the assertions contained within it. While we've worked with fellow community groups to get some of the most pernicious elements of the plan repealed, we've also closely monitored developments under the plan to see how they have comported with the City's predictions. Sadly, many of our fears have been confirmed.

SOME OF THE REPORTS THAT VILLAGE PRESERVATION HAS GENERATED ON THE CITY'S UPZONING PLAN.



Two years later, the plan hasn't produced a single unit of "affordable" housing. By contrast, published reports say a six-story commercial building will be converted to full-floor and duplex luxury apartments, including one featuring its own private pool, without a single unit of affordable housing — all thanks to the rezoning (prior zoning would not have allowed such a conversion). City officials promised all residential developments under the rezoning would include affordable housing, but this utilizes one of the many loopholes we pointed out that allows them to avoid doing so.

At 32 Thompson Street, the City initially predicted no development would take place because the site contained a building with rent-regulated apartments, which it claimed would not be endangered by the rezoning (we argued vehemently otherwise). The building and all its rent-regulated units have since been demolished, with no word yet as to what will be built there. At 360 Bowery, where the City predicted affordable housing would be included in a new development, a 283-ft.-tall luxury office tower has gone up with no affordable housing. Another announced development on Centre Street — located within what the City called the rezoning's "housing opportunity zone" — will also include no housing, affordable or otherwise. There are two new developments in motion that may eventually include some affordable housing units, along with three times as many super-luxury ones. One is located on a site where the City said no development would take place. The other has been halted since demolition work on the site resulted in the death of a worker.

MORE INFO villagepreservation.org/sohonohoupzoning

SAVING THE HISTORIC NEW YORK EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY

We continue to lead the effort to seek landmark designation for the threatened New York Eye and Ear Infirmary (NYEEI) at Second Avenue and East 13th Street — a striking structure built in stages between 1853 and 1903 that houses the oldest specialized hospital in the Western Hemisphere, New York's second oldest hospital, and a place of profound service to people with disabilities

and visual and hearing impairments. Helen Keller spoke at its ribbon-cutting.

New owner Mount Sinai had previously indicated they planned to shut down NYEEI, or at least scatter its services across the city, likely selling off the empty building for development.

Now they plan to close down the entire adjacent Beth Israel hospital, leaving its fate further in doubt.

We've been working closely with doctors, staff, patients, and community leaders to try to preserve both the services and



the historic building, speaking at rallies and mobilizing the public to call for landmark designation. In spite of there being almost no designated landmarks in the city that speak to the history of disabled people and efforts to support them, so far the city has resisted the call to honor and recognize this building.

MORE INFO villagepreservation.org/east-village

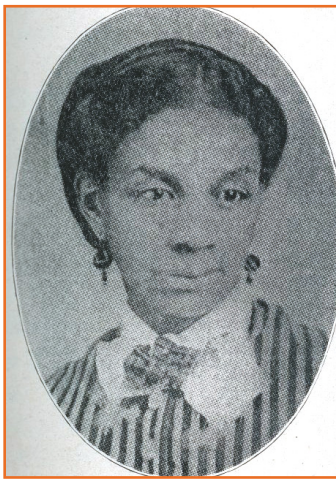
5 MORE REMARKABLE HISTORY REVEALED AT 50 WEST 13TH

We have been spearheading the campaign to seek landmark designation for the endangered 1846 house at 50 West 13th Street, and recently discovered some even more incredible historic significance to the building.

We've compiled this information as part of a campaign to seek landmark designation for the building, the future of which is uncertain since the death of 13th Street Repertory Theatre owner Edith O'Hara.

Now, historian Eric K. Washington has shared that his research on Sarah Smith Garnet — one of the leading voices of the Black civil rights movement in New York in the 19th century, one of the era's leading

No. 50 West 13th Street is perhaps best known as the longtime home of the 13th Street Repertory Theatre, a critical voice in the Off-Off Broadway theater movement since the mid-20th century. Village Preservation research also revealed that this was the home and place of business of one of 19th-century New York's most successful African-American business leaders, Jacob Day, who was also a crusader for Black civil rights and abolition, as well as seemingly a supporter of Underground Railroad efforts.



suffragists, and a trailblazing educator who was the first Black female principal in the New York City School system — revealed she also lived here for about a decade while Day owned the house. Day opened his home to many of his fellow Black civil rights advocates at a time when Greenwich Village was the center of Black life in New York City, further enhancing the house's significance. In light of this new information, we're calling upon the City to immediately landmark the house, which has been allowed to fall into disrepair and requires urgent intervention to be saved.

50 WEST 13TH STREET (LEFT) AND SARAH SMITH TOMPKINS GARNET.

MORE INFO villagepreservation.org/50-west-13th-street

In Brief

LICHTENSTEIN PLAQUE REVEALED MARKING 100TH BIRTHDAY

This fall we were proud to unveil a plaque marking the former home and studio of great American pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, at 741-45 Washington Street. We were joined by Dorothy Lichtenstein and Whitney Museum Director Adam Weinberg on the eve of what would have been the transformative artist's 100th birthday, to celebrate his remarkable contributions to art history.

We also celebrated the transformation of the building into the new permanent home of the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program, continuing its tradition of producing great art. This was our 23rd plaque unveiling; others have marked the homes of Jane Jacobs, James Baldwin, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Allen Ginsberg, Charles Mingus, Frank O'Hara, Frank Stella, Martha Graham and Lorraine Hansberry, among others, as well as historically significant sites such as the former NAACP headquarters, the Fillmore East, and Julius' Bar. Explore them all at villagepreservation.org/historic-plaques.



FROM LEFT: WHITNEY MUSEUM DIRECTOR ADAM WEINBERG, DOROTHY LICHTENSTEIN, AND VILLAGE PRESERVATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ANDREW BERMAN.

NEW PHOTO COLLECTIONS: 1970S, SOUTH OF UNION SQUARE, PANDEMIC + PROTEST

We've recently added three wonderful new photo collections to our online archives. One is local architect Linda Yowell's evocative images of changes in the West Village, from storefronts to the demolition of the Women's House of Detention, in the 1970s and through to the '90s. Another is Marjorie Zein's photos of our neighborhoods in 2020–22, showing the impacts of the Covid pandemic and the social upheaval of the protests that followed.

Lastly, we've added a collection of beautiful contemporary architectural photos of the neighborhood South of Union Square, taken by renowned photographer Dylan Chandler and commissioned by the Preservation League of NYS in partnership with Village Preservation, thanks to a Regrowth and Capacity grant from the NYS Council on the Arts.



DYLAN CHANDLER

The project was launched as part of this endangered historic area being named one of the League's 2022–23 "Seven to Save" sites. See them all at villagepreservation.org/imagearchive.



LINDA YOWELL



MARJORIE ZEIN

MAP MARKS 50 YEARS OF HIP-HOP HISTORY

As part of a yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary of the birth of hip-hop in the Bronx in 1973, Village Preservation held a series of tours and programs highlighting the many places in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo that played an important role in the development of the genre. In the late 1970s and early '80s, clubs, galleries, schools, museums, and shops in our neighborhoods helped transform hip-hop from an underground phenomenon of sporadic parties across New

York City to an enduring worldwide musical, fashion, and visual art form.

We've since placed all that information on an online interactive map, allowing the public to explore these sites and the critical events connected to them. It's one of dozens of maps we've created to illuminate the artistic, social, political, and architectural history of our neighborhoods — check out these resources at villagepreservation.org/our-maps.



FROM THE DIRECTOR
ANDREW BERMAN



"VILLAGE VOICES" was our much-beloved outdoor public art exhibition that celebrated two centuries of artistic, social, and cultural innovators of our neighborhoods through 31 shadowboxes and two multifaceted interactive installations featuring photographs, artifacts, and soundscape recordings. The weeks-long displays in 2021 and 2022 gave thousands of participants an inspiring look into the incomparable contributions and heritage of our neighborhoods, highlighting figures from Berenice Abbott and W.H. Auden to Charlie Parker and Leontyne Pryce, with narrations by Rachel Maddow, Jesse Eisenberg, and John Leguizamo, among many others.

This fall we were thrilled to give VILLAGE VOICES a permanent online home, so it could continue to engage the public around the history so intrinsic to Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo, at villagepreservation.org/village-voices. Building an awareness and appreciation of that history, its value, and the need to honor and preserve it is what we do every day. With ever-increasing challenges to doing so, and ever-diminishing support from City officials for doing so, taking that cause directly to the public is more important than ever. These stories are our stories, and we must never let them be forgotten.

Bulletin Board

STAY IN THE KNOW! Join our email list for alerts on critical preservation and development issues at villagepreservation.org/email.

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

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

GET WITH THE PROGRAM! See all of 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 of historic significance in our neighborhoods on our Greenwich Village Historic District Map, Women's Suffrage Map, Greek Revival architecture map, Civil Rights and Social Justice Map, South of Union Square Map, and East Village Building Blocks website — all at villagepreservation.org/resources.

DID YOU KNOW? Village Preservation has secured landmark designation of over 1,250 buildings, including 11 historic districts and district extensions, and zoning protections for nearly 100 blocks, from the Hudson River to Avenue D. See villagepreservation.org/accomplishments.

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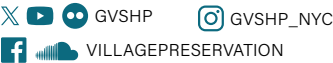
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