



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

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July 9, 2009

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

**Re: 309 Sixth Avenue, in the proposed Greenwich Village Historic
District Extension II (South Village)**

Dear Chair Tierney:

I write to express my extreme concern about plans filed to construct a 7-story building at 309 Sixth Avenue (Carmine/West 4th Streets) in the proposed Greenwich Village Historic District Extension II (South Village).

The existing building on the site was heavily altered in the 1960's, and has lost all of its historic exterior details. However, it is adjacent to a row of intact 1828 houses of which it may have originally been a part. Regardless, while 309 Sixth Avenue is not worthy of preservation, it is critical that any new construction on this site match the context and character of its surroundings, which in this case includes this largely intact row of houses, and other similarly low-rise structures.

In spite of requests to the applicant and architect, we have not been able to view plans for the proposed building. Lacking such details, on its face, a 7-story building on this narrow lot at this location would seem unlikely to be sympathetic to or appropriate for its surroundings.

I therefore strongly urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission not to allow permits to be issued for the proposed development until landmark designation has taken place, so that any such plans would undergo the full public hearing and review process of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Now that this district has been calendared, the Commission has 40 days from the date of a new building application such as this to keep the permit from being issued. During this time it can convince the applicant to change or hold his or her plans, and if they do not, the LPC can designate the district or site so that permits cannot be issued without full public review.

As you know, prior to calendaring, GVSHP had urged that the LPC ensure that it is able to designate within its allotted 40 days if necessary to prevent inappropriate development or demolition from taking place in the district (see attached letter). I hope that the LPC will now exercise that right and act to ensure that no development takes place at 309 Sixth Avenue without the benefit of a full Landmarks Preservation Commission public hearing, review, and approval process.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
City Council Speaker Christine Quinn
State Senator Tom Duane
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Municipal Art Society
New York Landmarks Conservancy
Historic Districts Council
Members, South Village Advisory Board



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April 15, 2009

Hon. Robert Tierney
Chair, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Consideration of the Proposed South Village Historic District

Dear Chair Tierney:

On behalf of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, I would like to express our extreme gratitude for the Commission's willingness to consider GVSHP's proposal for a South Village Historic District. This, along with the Commission's actions under your leadership to designate parts of the Gansevoort Market, NoHo, and the Far West Village, as well as several individual sites in the South Village, Far West Village, and East Village, reflect a tremendous commitment to preserving the historic character of these neighborhoods.

However, GVSHP also has very strong concerns about the ongoing and accelerating rate of loss in the South Village, and the very real potential for further and accelerated losses depending upon how the designation of the first phase of the proposed district is handled. **That is why we strongly urge the Commission to hold its planned initial public meeting regarding any new South Village Historic District proposal concurrently with or after calendaring the proposed district.** This will put preliminary protections to prevent demolition or harmful alterations in place along with notification of the Commission's intention to designate. **We also strongly urge that the timing of calendaring allow the Commission the ability to designate within the 40 day window it has to prevent demolition or harmful alterations.**

As you know, without such timing, **holding an owner's meeting and publicly announcing the Commission's intention to designate without any protections in place allows (and can even encourage) bad actors to secure demolition or alteration permits which supersede any subsequent landmark designation.** This has the effect of undermining the good work of the Commission in pursuing landmark designation, and of the countless people and groups who worked so hard to advance this proposal. Unfortunately, we saw numerous instances of this with the Gansevoort Market Historic District and NoHo Historic District Extension designations. It is our strong desire not to see that repeated in the South Village.

I understand that the Commission has limited resources, and that it is considering historic district proposals throughout the city. However, it requires no additional expenditure of Commission resources to time its initial public

meeting and calendaring so that bad actors who would seek to avoid landmark designation are not given the opportunity and the notice to do so.

We do of course continue to strongly urge that the Commission move forward the process of consideration and designation of the South Village as quickly as possible. As has been brought to your attention, there have been a devastating number of recent losses in the South Village, including 178 Bleecker Street, the Provincetown Playhouse and Apartments, 12 Leroy Street, 23 Cornelia Street, and the former San Remo Café, among others. At the same time, many other important historic sites are currently threatened, including as 233-237 Bleecker Street (the likely inspiration for Edward Hopper's "Early Sunday Morning") and the historic Fire Patrol House #2 at 84 West 3rd Street.

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation greatly values its working relationship with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the many initiatives we have worked together constructively to advance. It is therefore our strong hope that you will consider these issues regarding moving forward with the proposed South Village Historic District, to ensure that the South Village's fragile and irreplaceable historic character is truly protected, and that the efficacy of the Commission and the public's efforts in this regard is preserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andrew Berman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Historic South Village Advisory Board