



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

232 East 11th Street
New York, New York 10003

(212) 475-9585
fax: (212) 475-9582
www.gvshp.org

Executive Director
Andrew Berman

President of the Board
Mary Ann Arisman

Vice-Presidents
Arthur Levin
Arbie Thalacker
Linda Yowell

Secretary/Treasurer
Katherine Schoonover

Trustees
John Bacon
Penelope Bureau
Elizabeth Ely
Cassie Glover
Jo Hamilton
Thomas Harney
Leslie S. Mason
Ruth McCoy
Florent Morellet
Peter Mullan
Andrew S. Paul
Cynthia Penney
Robert Rogers
Jonathan Russo
Judith Stonehill
Fred Wistow
F. Anthony Zunino III

Advisors
Kent Barwick
Joan K. Davidson
Christopher Forbes
Margaret Halsey Gardiner
Margot Gayle
Elizabeth Gilmore
Carol Greitzer
Tony Hiss
Martin Hutner
James Stewart Polshek
Elinor Ratner
Henry Hope Reed
Anne-Marie Sumner
Calvin Trillin
Jean-Claude van Itallie
George Vellonakis
Vicki Weiner
Anthony C. Wood

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,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Historic South Village Advisory Board