



Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

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January 18, 2007

Hon. Patricia Lancaster
Commissioner, NYC Department of Buildings
280 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Amanda Burden
Director, NYC Department of City Planning
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Signage at 651-657 Hudson Street/25-33 Gansevoort Street/10-20
Ninth Avenue/352-363 West 13th Street, The Hotel Gansevoort**

Dear Commissioner Lancaster and Director Burden:

I write regarding two large signs currently being erected at the above-referenced location. I am greatly concerned about the rapid proliferation of inappropriate and illegal signage in the Gansevoort Market/Meatpacking District neighborhood, and their continued presence even after these signs have been reported to the City. With its wide-open intersections, large crowds on evenings and weekends, and low-rise buildings, there is the danger that the proliferation of large-scale signage could turn the Gansevoort Market/Meatpacking District neighborhood into a new mini-Times Square. This would be wholly inappropriate, and I am concerned that this latest addition of signage would only add to this growing problem.

According to Department of Buildings records, on 7/27/06 a permit was issued for a 14' x 48' (672 sq. ft.) indirectly illuminated advertising ground sign, and as of today a permit is "in process" for a 20' x 60' (1200 sq. ft.) non-illuminated business sign at this address. The latter seems particularly grotesque in its proportion and entirely out of place for this neighborhood. While certain types of signage are allowed in M1-5 zones (the zoning district for this site), I question whether permits should have been issued for these signs in light of their size, their distance from an arterial highway, their distance from a public park, and their proximity to several zoning districts which allow residential uses, including several nearby R6 zones. Even in M1 zones, there are prohibitions against certain types of signage when they are within viewing distance of a public park of ½ acre or more, and the nearby Corporal Seravalli Park is 1.143 acres according to Parks Department records. There are also of course prohibitions on some types of signage within a certain distance of an arterial highway, of which the nearby Route 9A is one, and other prohibitions regarding proximity of certain signs to districts zoned for residential uses. I urge the Department to re-examine these permits in light of these factors to ensure that the existing permit was not issued in error, and the pending permit will not be.

Hopefully you will find that such large-scale signage is not allowed at this location, where it certainly does not belong. I am also hopeful that the various nearby signs which are indisputably illegal, and which GVSHP has already reported to the City several times over the last several months and asked for enforcement action against them, will be removed (see attached copies of letters). However, should it be found that the planned signage at the Hotel Gansevoort is in fact legal, I would urge the Department of City Planning to consider changes which would prohibit such signage in the future. I believe that there is a strong desire not to see the Gansevoort Market/Meatpacking District neighborhood overrun with the type of large-scale signage and advertising we are unfortunately seeing proliferate there now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Berman", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: City Council Speaker Christine Quinn
Borough President Scott Stringer
State Senator Tom Duane
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Municipal Art Society
community groups



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Anthony C. Wood

February 7, 2007

Edward J. Fortier, Esq.
Director, Padlock/Sign Enforcement Units
NYC Department of Buildings
280 Broadway
New York, NY 10007
via e-mail to edwardf@buildings.nyc.gov

Re: 352 West 13th Street, Hotel Gansevoort

Dear Mr. Fortier:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Department of Buildings' inspection and investigation of the above-referenced double-billboard. As you know, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation is extremely concerned about these signs that are in the process of being erected, which are of the scale of billboards you would expect to see on an interstate freeway, as are the literally scores of neighbors we have heard from about them. I recognize and appreciate the swift and vigorous attention you have given to this matter, and appreciate the thorough response you have given to our letter of January 18 regarding this issue.

I appreciate that the Department is requesting additional information from the applicant, but recognize that under current conditions and with the information you have the Department believes the signs may be legal. However, I will re-raise two issues that you and I have discussed and ask that the Department investigate them further, as I believe they may ultimately prove the signs illegal:

- **Angle of the Signs in Relation to a Residential or Commercial District Boundary.** As it would appear that the signs may in fact be at less than a 90 degree angle from the boundary of the adjacent C1-6 district, I ask that this be re-measured. Additionally, however, in addition to the C1-6 and R6 districts from which the angle was mentioned in your letter, the sign appears to be within 500 feet of the boundary of a C6-2A and R6B district, and appears to face these district boundaries almost directly, rather than at the requisite 90 degrees. In light of this, I ask that the Department re-examine this issue with an eye towards disqualifying these signs on these bases.
- **Prohibition of Illumination of Signs Above 58 feet in Height.** The zoning text prohibits indirectly illuminated signs above 58 feet in height at this location. While only the lower of the two signs, with a height of 52 feet, is supposed to be indirectly illuminated, because the upper sign, which rises to 75 feet, is directly above the lower sign's illumination, we believe the upper sign may in fact end up being indirectly illuminated as

well. Should this be the case, this would make the upper sign out of conformance with zoning regulations.

I appreciate the Department's continued willingness to investigate this matter. Given the rapid proliferation of illegal billboards in this area (reported to the Department in previous letters), there is a great deal of distress over these newest signs as well as the many long-standing signs which are yet to be removed. I appreciate your commitment to act against those illegal non-arterial signs in the near future, as I believe that such action is essential to preserving the character of this neighborhood and ensuring that it does not turn into a "mini-Times Square." Should the billboards at 352 West 13th Street prove to be legal, we will continue to urge city officials, as we have before, to contemplate actions which would improve those regulations, and signs do not belong and are entirely unwelcome in this neighborhood.

Sincerely,

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

Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: DOB Commissioner Patricia Lancaster
DOB Manhattan Borough Commissioner Christopher Santulli
City Planning Chair Amanda Burden
City Council Speaker Christine Quinn
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
State Senator Tom Duane
Assemblymember Deborah Glick