



the ANTHEMION, newsletter of the

Summer 2014

GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Huge NYU Lawsuit Victory!

*GVSHP & Allies Win In Court,
But City & NYU Appeal*

Earlier this year, GVSHP and allied community groups won a huge victory when New York State Supreme Court Justice Donna Mills agreed with our contention that the City had illegally given away public parks to NYU as part of the approvals for the university's massive 20 year expansion plan, and ruled that these spaces must remain parkland. This made much of NYU's planned 2 million square foot expansion plan impossible and—from our perspective—should force the entire plan back to the drawing board, since it was found to be based upon illegal suppositions and flawed environmental analysis.

GVSHP was joined by many elected officials and community leaders in celebrating this legal victory. We came together to urge the City and university not to appeal the ruling, but rather to come to the bargaining table to work on a new plan that could meet the school's needs while also respecting the concerns of the community.

Unfortunately, neither NYU nor the new administration were willing to go this route. This spring, NYU and the City filed an appeal of the judge's ruling. Since the judge agreed with some but not all of our legal contentions, GVSHP and our allies in turn counterappealed. The case is expected to go before a new judge later this year.

In the interim, NYU has indicated that they may seek to move ahead with the parts of their expansion plan which were not directly blocked by Judge Mills' ruling, including the massive proposed "Zipper" Building on the west side of Mercer Street between Bleecker and Houston Streets. GVSHP, our allies, and our lawyers are looking at all of our options should the university seek to proceed.

While the ultimate outcome of the case remains to be seen, this ruling is a great vindication of our contention that the City Council and the prior Mayor were wrong in approving this plan—not just because it would be bad for our neighborhood and our city, but because it was in fact illegal.



Elected officials and community leaders joined with GVSHP, our lawyers (speaking), and our co-plaintiffs for a press conference calling upon the City and NYU to accept the judge's decision (l.). NYU's massive expansion plan (r.), with planned 'Zipper' building at lower left."

[More Inside ▶](#)

Spotlight On: The West Village

Preservation Wins and Losses in 2014

We had two recent significant preservation wins in the **Meatpacking District**. At **40-56 10th Avenue** (at 13th Street), GVSHP helped defeat a zoning variance that would have allowed a development there 34% larger than current zoning limits allow. The developer claimed that the presence of the High Line on a corner of the property, and landfill underneath the site, created a “financial hardship” for the owner. GVSHP pointed out that the High Line’s presence made a development on the site uniquely valuable, and that other developers had profitably built on nearby sites with the same subsurface conditions. The variance was finally defeated in May.

At **9-19 Ninth Avenue** (at Little West 12th Street), where the restaurant Pastis had been located for many years, GVSHP helped stop landmarks approvals for a planned glass and steel addition atop this century-old, two-story building, which would have more than doubled its height and loomed over the cobblestoned Gansevoort Plaza. Because



9-19 Ninth Avenue with the proposed addition.



The original, rejected proposal for 130 7th Ave. So.

GVSHP was able to get this site and much of the Meatpacking District landmarked in 2003, the addition required approval of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). We are glad to report that the LPC agreed with our contentions, and told the applicant to rework the design to make it more compatible with the building and its surroundings.

GVSHP also weighed in on two landmarks applications for new buildings on 7th Avenue South, to replace existing 1-story commercial structures. At **192 7th Avenue South** (at 11th Street—home of ‘Fantasy World’), GVSHP did not object to

demolition of the existing building, but felt the proposed new 4-5 story building was disjointed and did not relate well to the character of the surrounding West Village. The LPC agreed, and told the applicant they must rework the design.

At **130 7th Avenue South** (10th/Charles Streets—former home of Veranda Restaurant), a developer proposed a 7-story residential

building. GVSHP pushed back against the height and design of the building, arguing neither were appropriate for the site. While the LPC did require the height be lowered by one story and the design changed, we were disappointed the Commission did not require more dramatic changes before approving.

We were also disappointed by the Commission’s approval of a new residential tower for a parking lot at the **northwest corner of Barrow and Greenwich Streets, on the St. Luke’s block**. A proposed 153 ft. tall tower was reduced modestly to 121 feet by the LPC, but the building itself was simply made bulkier at the bottom, and glassier at the top. GVSHP strongly opposed the original proposal, and objected to the Commission approving the revised design, which we felt still did not relate appropriately to the special character of the surrounding block



St. Luke’s original proposed tower (l.), and as approved by the LPC (r.).

and neighborhood. Additionally, the Commission did not allow the public an opportunity to testify about the revised design, thus cutting neighbors and other concerned parties out of the process.

Finally, in February, GVSHP was able to successfully lead the charge to force **Equinox Gym** to remove a giant, illegal, 3-story billboard from the façade of their building at **Greenwich Avenue and 12th Street** in the Greenwich Village Historic District.

South Village Preservation Fight Continues

Landmark District Approved, Rezoning Plan Supported

This Spring, the City Council upheld the landmarking of the new South Village Historic District which GVSHP proposed and fought for. Covering thirteen blocks and two hundred fifty buildings south of Washington Square, this new historic district—the largest expansion of landmark protections in Greenwich Village since 1969—is actually the second phase of GVSHP’s proposed South Village Historic District.

The first phase, covering a dozen blocks west of Sixth Avenue between Houston and West 4th Street, was designated in 2010.

The Bloomberg Administration refused to consider the third and final phase of GVSHP’s proposed South Village Historic District, extending south of Houston Street to Watts Street, west of West Broadway to 6th Avenue. However, with a new Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair taking over this summer, GVSHP will renew its push for designation of this historic and threatened area.

GVSHP got our entire proposed South Village Historic District placed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places in early 2014. While not including the same strong anti-demolition and regulatory protections as the New York City landmarking which we

continue to pursue for the entire South Village, placement on the Registers does provide tax breaks and other financial incentives for preservation of historic buildings, and does protect against State and Federal actions,

including the use of State or Federal funds, that would harm the historic character of the area.

In early 2014, GVSHP also came out with a proposal for rezoning an outdated zoning district covering much of the South Village, as a means of providing further protection for the area. The current zoning, dating from 1961, encourages tall towers surrounded by open space, and allows dorms,

university buildings, and other “community facilities” (as defined by the zoning) to be built much larger than residential buildings—nearly twice the size. Because not all of the South Village is landmarked, and because even in landmarked areas out-of-scale development is occasionally approved, this rezoning plan is vitally important.

GVSHP issued a report showing that under the South Village’s existing zoning, it would be possible on several sites to build a 250 foot tall dorm. We proposed instead a ‘contextual rezoning’ of the

South Village, which would put in place strict height limits, require buildings to conform to the prevailing streetwall, and eliminate the zoning bonus for dorms and other “community facilities” (a bonus often used by developers to game the system and build larger, for-profit buildings).

At a public hearing before a standing room-only crowd at the Community Board early this year, the proposal garnered unanimous support from the public and a strong resolution in support from the Community Board. GVSHP is now seeking support for the proposal from City Councilmembers Corey Johnson and Margaret Chin and Borough President Brewer, and their assistance in getting the City to take on and approve the rezoning.

In other South Village news, a new owner has finally begun restoration work on the long-deteriorating, landmarked 1846 house at **43 MacDougal Street** (at King Street). GVSHP and neighbors have fought for years to get this house stabilized and restored, which a prior owner neglected for decades. For more info, see gvshp.org/sovil.



Image created by GVSHP of a 250 ft. tall high rise which could be built in the South Village under existing zoning.



Hundreds attended GVSHP's Town Hall on the Hudson River Park air rights issue this past fall.

Hudson River Park Air Rights Controversy Deepens

Questions Remain Unanswered As Secret Deals Emerge

GVSHP has been a staunch critic of the plan to sell “air rights” from the Hudson River Park, passed by the State Legislature and signed by the Governor in late 2013. The plan would generate revenue for the park, but likely at the expense of allowing development at a greater size and density than currently permitted along waterfront blocks adjacent to the park. The State legislation enabling such a deal, introduced by Assemblymembers Deborah Glick and Dick Gottfried, and approved by local State Senators Hoylman and Squadron, was passed with almost no public notice or debate in the last hours of the legislative session.

Vital questions remain unanswered about the air rights provision, including how many air rights the legislation allows to be taken from the park, what process can be used to transfer the air rights, how the air rights would be

priced to ensure that the park is getting an appropriate benefit, and how we can ensure that air rights are not sold simply to benefit developers, rather than meeting the true financial needs of the park.

GVSHP has consistently called upon the Hudson River Park Trust and elected officials to provide clear answers to these questions. We have also put forward plans for restrictions on the use of air rights and alternative means for raising revenue for the park that would not lead to overdevelopment of our waterfront blocks—proposals which have received endorsements from several dozen west side community groups and leaders.



Pier 40, with the St. John's Building behind it.

In May, it was widely reported in the press that the State and the Hudson River Park Trust had signed a secret, tentative deal in December for the sale of air rights from the massive Pier 40 (at Houston Street) to a developer for use at the three block long St. John's Terminal Building across West Street. Press reports say the developer would demolish the existing building in stages starting from the north, allowing new high-rise residential construction on the site.

What was particularly disturbing about the secret deal, however, was that it would use a State process which overrides local zoning regulations. The plan would therefore require little or no public review or approval, giving the affected local community virtually no opportunity to affect the outcome. GVSHP and allied community groups had called attention to the danger of this approach early on, and months before the secret deal was brokered had publicly urged the Governor not to use such a method to allow air rights transfers.

Mayor de Blasio and several local elected officials have called upon the Governor to subject the deal to city zoning review. Such a review far from guarantees a satisfactory outcome or that the voice of the local community is heard, as this same process gave us the NYU Expansion Plan, the St. Vincent's/Rudin Condo rezoning, and the Chelsea Market upzoning. But by requiring City Council approval, this process would at least allow the local community some greater opportunity to affect the outcome, as the local Councilmember would have substantial influence over what is or is not approved.

GVSHP is continuing to press for answers to vital questions about the air rights plan, and to fight to protect our waterfront blocks from overdevelopment. For more info, see gvshp.org/airrights.

Greenwich Village Stories

“A Love Letter to the Village and East Village”

Greenwich Village Stories, A Collection of Memories is the new book published this spring by GVSHP in collaboration with Rizzoli International Publications. More than sixty artists, poets, musicians, playwrights, directors, architects, historians, restaurateurs, and other Villagers each contributed a memory or impression to the book that shows the special character of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. Contributors include Lou Reed, Andrew Solomon, Mimi Sheraton, and Hettie Jones, among many others. Artwork and photographs by Berenice Abbott, Milton Avery, Allen Ginsberg, Saul Leiter, and Weegee are among those which grace the book.

Since its release, *Greenwich Village Stories* has received a more than enthusiastic response. Over 1,100 people attended our book events during April. Keith McNally hosted a reception at Morandi for the book



GVSHP Executive Director Andrew Berman (r.) interviews book contributor John Leguizamo at the Strand.



book talk

contributors, and readings were held at the Strand Bookstore, the Writers Room, and Symphony Space. John Leguizamo, Lenny Kaye, Penny Arcade, Dave Hill, Ralph Lee, and Isaac Mizrahi each read the stories they'd written for the book. At the end of April, Three Lives & Co. Booksellers organized a celebratory book signing, attended by many of the book contributors.

The New York Times described the book as “a beguiling collection of stories,” noting its eclectic contributors and evocative photographs. *Vanity Fair*, *The Villager*, and a dozen other media outlets, from the *Chicago Tribune* to the *Connecticut Post*, *Vogue.com* to *The Daily Beast*, raved about the book. As one reviewer wrote, “Augmenting the text are pieces of art, photographs of vanished places (such as the great Bleecker Street Cinema), jazz album covers and other visual ephemera that add up to a beautiful mosaic of Village life and history.” Another said, “The book is a 192 page love letter and homage to the neighborhood’s spirit, which continues to inspire to this day.”

The publication of this book evolved from GVSHP’s mission to preserve the cultural



William S. Burroughs. Allen Ginsberg, 1953. Courtesy of the Allen Ginsberg Estate, New York. From *Greenwich Village Stories*.

history of our neighborhoods, just as an earlier publication, *The Architecture of the Greenwich Village Waterfront*, was part of GVSHP’s efforts to protect its architectural heritage. Preserving the cultural history is no small task, as GVSHP Executive Director Andrew Berman observed in his introduction to the book, “especially when one considers the vastness of that heritage and how much change it has undergone.”

Does anyone recognize the young man on the cover of the book? A number of readers have asked, but we have no idea. The photograph was taken by the late Robert Otter in 1965, on the corner of MacDougal and Bleecker Streets. If you know who this might be, please let us know!

Greenwich Village Stories was edited by Judith Stonehill, a longtime GVSHP board member and author of a series of books on the city published by Rizzoli. Royalties from the book go to GVSHP, so it’s especially gratifying that *Greenwich Village Stories* is already going into a second printing.

To purchase *Greenwich Village Stories* or find out more, including watching videos of readings and discussions with some of the book contributors, go to gvshp.org/gvstories.

Tifereth Israel Synagogue

In March, GVSHP helped rally the troops in support of landmark designation of this 150 year old synagogue at 334 East 14th Street (1st/2nd Avenues), which at various points in its history served as a German Baptist and Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The building was first considered for landmark designation in 1966, but no vote was ever taken. In late 2013 when GVSHP became aware that the building was being advertised for sale, we called upon the Landmarks Preservation Commission to finally protect it before it's too late. In response, this Spring the Commission finally held a public hearing, at which GVSHP and other preservation and East Village advocates called for the architecturally distinctive building to be landmarked.

The leadership of the congregation opposes designation, while City Councilmember Mendez and State Senator Hoylman called for a compromise to landmark the main front part of the synagogue while allowing a rear section to avoid designation. Under full landmark designation the rear section could potentially be demolished and replaced, but new construction would be subject to landmarks review to ensure it is compatible with and appropriate for the site. Under the compromise, however, demolition and construction on the rear site would have no landmarks oversight. GVSHP continues to push for full designation. We are urging



Tifereth Israel Synagogue.

*in
brief*

the Commission to vote before the current Chair leaves office this summer. See gvshp.org/ti.

Big Plans for 110 University?

110 University Place (12th Street), the longtime home of Bowlmor Lanes, was recently purchased for development by William Macklowe. The site is not landmarked and lies outside of any designated historic districts, and the zoning could allow a very tall tower on the site. Working closely with neighbors, GVSHP has reached out to the developer and urged him to build a modestly-scaled, contextually designed structure that would reflect the historic character of the neighborhood, rather than an out-of-context, out-of-scale high-rise. GVSHP has reached out to local elected officials and urged them to do the same.

This potential development points to a high priority for GVSHP—extending greater landmarking and zoning protections to the University Place/Broadway/14th Street corridor, which is largely lacking in such safeguards. GVSHP will be working with neighbors and local elected officials to formulate and advance landmark and rezoning proposals to help protect the distinctive qualities of this area.

Seeking a Better LPC

In May, Mayor de Blasio named Meenakshi Srinivasan as his nominee to Chair the Landmarks Preservation Commission. While the Commission has in recent years (with considerable prodding from GVSHP and others) significantly expanded landmarks protections in our neighborhood (see gvshp.org/10), there are areas of serious concern. The Commission often moves too slowly to protect endangered areas, allowing some of our most important historic sites to be destroyed. The public is not allowed to weigh in on revised proposals for changes in historic districts, thus allowing significant projects to be approved without full public input. And the Commission makes accessing information about landmarks violations, proposed changes in historic districts, and the status of public hearings difficult if not impossible, even as current technology could make greater transparency and public engagement much easier.

GVSHP has reached out to the Mayor, the new LPC Chair, and the City Council to urge that these issues be addressed and reforms implemented. We have proposed common sense solutions that would make the landmarking process more effective, efficient, and easily understood. Read more at gvshp.org/lpcreforms.

From the Director

With the recent naming of new Chairs of the City Planning Commission and Landmarks Preservation Commission by Mayor de Blasio, we are entering a new era for landmarking and development in New York City. The Mayor has made clear that his primary focus will be upon maintaining and creating affordable housing. GVSHP is working hard to ensure that his administration recognizes that such policies are fully compatible, and can go hand-in-hand, with historic preservation.



This is more important than ever as the Real Estate Board of New York increases its attacks upon landmarking, calling historic preservation in our city “out of control” (have they not noticed the record number of construction cranes dotting our cityscape?). This powerful lobbying group, with good friends at all levels of city and state government, is actually trying to use the new Mayor’s focus on affordable housing as a cudgel against historic preservation, claiming it impedes production and homogenizes neighborhoods. While we have joined with affordable housing advocates to blast this pernicious lie, we need to do more to combat the industry’s tremendous resources and demonstrate preservation’s value in protecting qualities of our city that all New Yorkers benefit from and hold dear.

The first year of a new Mayoral administration will likely define its direction and focus. I hope you’ll join GVSHP in working to ensure this administration recognizes the necessity and benefit of thoughtful planning and historic preservation.



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We also wish to acknowledge the support of City Council Members Rosie Mendez and Margaret Chin and GVSHP members.

GVSHP Bulletin Board

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Help the cause by volunteering. Assist us at events, programs, or in the office; or lend us your special skill or home for an event. Go to gvshp.org/volunteer.

Get with the Program! GVSHP conducts more than fifty tours, lectures, panel discussions, and book talks a year. See the schedule at gvshp.org/programs, and view videos of past programs at gvshp.org/pastprograms.

Want to know about landmarks applications in your neighborhood? Visit our landmarks applications webpage, the only one of its kind in the city. You can view any application in the Village, East Village, Meatpacking District or NoHo for any proposed change to a landmarked building that requires a public hearing. Find out when the hearings and votes will take place, and how you can weigh in and affect the outcome, or sign up for alerts about the status of the application—see gvshp.org/lpc.

Visit GVSHP’s blog *Off the Grid* for fun and fascinating glimpses into our neighborhoods’ hidden history, eye-catching architecture, and colorful characters—gvshp.org/blog.

Planned Giving—make a legacy gift to GVSHP. Call **212/475-9585 x39**.

Did you know? Every day GVSHP monitors all 6,500 buildings in our neighborhoods for new building, alteration, or demolition permits, and all 3,000 landmarked structures for any proposed major changes.

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