



Greenwich
Village
Society for
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Preservation

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TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ANDREW BERMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TO THE CITY COUNCIL ZONING SUBCOMMITTEE
IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED UPZONING OF CHELSEA MARKET
October 23, 2012

Good morning Councilmembers, my name is Andrew Berman, and I am the Executive Director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. GVSHP is the largest membership organization in Greenwich Village, NoHo, and the East Village, with many members in Chelsea as well. GVSHP has a long history with Chelsea Market; it was included in our proposed NYC Gansevoort Market Historic District in 2001, and in 2007 we got the complex listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

We urge you in the strongest of terms not to approve this application, or to upzone Chelsea Market in any way.

There is no good reason to upzone Chelsea Market, and many good reasons not to. Chelsea Market is an iconic, beloved, and successful example of adaptive re-use. The former Nabisco Factory where Oreos were invented, Chelsea Market is a landmark in the truest sense of the word. The proposed additions atop the complex would destroy its character and its aesthetic integrity.

Further, this application does not exist in a vacuum. In recent years, the City has approved enormous rezonings in Community Board #4 – the West Chelsea Rezoning, Hudson Yards, and the Western and Eastern Railyards. These have created literally tens of millions of square feet of new development potential in and around Chelsea, only a small portion of which has yet been built. A massive development is planned nearby at Pier 57. As a result, in the coming years we will see an ever-growing swell of traffic and congestion in an area already bursting at the seams from new activity generated by the Meatpacking District, the High Line, West Chelsea gallery district, and Chelsea Market itself. The neighborhood is hard-pressed to absorb all of this traffic and crowding as it is, and it is hard to imagine how it will handle the millions more square feet of additional development planned for the coming years. Upzoning Chelsea Market to allow the addition of hundreds of thousands of square feet of office and hotel space that is not allowed under current zoning would only add insult to injury.

The Chelsea Market complex is not suffering as a business endeavor; far from it, it is thriving. There is no need for an upzoning or these large additions on top – the sole motivation is this international real estate developers' desire for even greater profits. Of course, it is their job to maximize their profits, and we don't begrudge them that. It is however the job of our City officials to look at the and consider entire public's interest and well-being before considering changing our zoning. If you do, in this case I am sure you will see that the public, and especially the local community, and those aspects of Chelsea Market which the public holds dear, will be gravely harmed if this upzoning is approved.

I am also submitting to the Council a copy of our petition with 1,500 signatures calling for the plan to be rejected.