



Greenwich  
Village  
Society for  
Historic  
Preservation

252 East 11th Street  
New York, New York 10003

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

*Executive Director*  
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Jean-Claude van Itallie  
Vicki Weiner  
Anthony C. Wood

May 18, 2007

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

**Re: Billboards at 108 Avenue B and elsewhere in the East Village**

Dear Commissioner Lancaster:

In March, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation wrote to the Department of Buildings concerning two very large illegal billboards at **108 Avenue B**, within a residentially zoned neighborhood and highly visible from Tompkins Square Park. I thank the Department for your response and action in this case; DOB did inspect the billboards and served the owner with a violation for the signs (ECB Violation #34545488Y).

On May 11, 2007, the Department of Buildings closed the violation, finding that it had been "cured." However, the signs were removed for just a few days, apparently just long enough for the owners to sign an affidavit proclaiming the violation no longer exists. Newer signs, also for the Helio company, were shortly thereafter reinstalled at the same location (please see attached images).

Clearly the building owners are flagrantly flouting the law and seem to be misrepresenting their curing of the violation to the DOB. Another complaint has been called into 311 (#1194011), and I ask that the Department act swiftly to ensure that action is taken against these billboards and the owners. I ask that the Department take decisive action to ensure that these signs are removed and stay removed.

In addition to the billboard at Avenue B and East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, there are several others in the neighborhood which we reported to DOB several months ago that are awaiting the inspection, investigation, and further action by DOB:

**206-208 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street:** In November 2005, DOB issued three ECB violations for an illegal advertising sign at this building. The fine was paid, but a very large billboard still hangs from the building's west façade. A new complaint through 311 was reported on March 26, 2007, but has not been inspected.

**442 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street:** The Department has investigated this illegal billboard, at the corner of Avenue A and East 9<sup>th</sup> Street, and has issued served several violations. Nonetheless, the sign, which is visible from within Tompkins Square Park, remains in place.

**76 Third Avenue:** In October 2006, a complaint was made through 311 regarding an illegal billboard on the side of this building, and DOB inspected the site on January 23, 2007. The DOB inspector determined that there was “No Action Necessary” because of a 1998 DOB permit (#101796148) for a 45’ X 52’ advertising sign on the side wall. This permit erroneously states that the property is zoned M1-5B, but the property is in fact situated within a C6-1 zone, where such a billboard would not be allowed. As per a prior letter to you on April 10, 2007, I again ask that DOB inspect and revoke the invalid permit issued for this billboard.

Additionally, despite complaints issued to DOB through 311, the following illegal advertising signs are still awaiting inspection: **91 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 26 Second Avenue, 64 Third Avenue, 111 Third Avenue, and 59 Fourth Avenue.**

The East Village, like many neighborhoods, is witnessing the rapid proliferation of illegal billboards put up by building owners who appear to know they are illegal and know how to avoid effective enforcement by the City. I ask you to act quickly and decisively to ensure that the previously reported illegal billboards are inspected and removed as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director

cc: Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer  
State Senator Tom Duane  
State Senator Martin Connor  
Assemblymember Deborah Glick  
Assemblymember Brian Kavanaugh  
Councilmember Rosie Mendez  
Community Board 3  
East Village Community Coalition



108 Avenue B on May 18, 2007.



108 Avenue B on March 25, 2007



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Anthony C. Wood

April 10, 2007

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

### Re: Proliferation of Billboards in the East Village

Dear Commissioner Lancaster:

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP) has seen a substantial and disturbing increase in the number of illegal billboards in the East Village recently. Most of the neighborhood is zoned residential, and therefore advertising billboards are outright forbidden by the zoning resolution. All of these billboards have been reported to DOB through 311 and directly to DOB by GVSHP. However, not all of them have been inspected, and of those that have been inspected, none of the inspections have yet resulted in the removal of these unsightly large advertising signs. I am therefore bringing them to your attention in the hopes that DOB will take swift and decisive action against them.

DOB has inspected the following addresses for signage violations, but the billboards still remain in place:

**108 Avenue B:** On March 16, 2007, GVSHP wrote a letter to DOB about the two, four-story billboards on the East 7<sup>th</sup> Street side of this building. The billboards are highly visible from within Tompkins Square Park and are therefore particularly egregious. We thank DOB for promptly inspecting these billboards in February and determining that a violation is warranted. However, according to BIS, no violation has been yet served, and the illegal billboards are still in place.

**206-208 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street:** In November 2005, DOB issued three ECB violations for an illegal advertising sign at this building. The fine was paid, but a very large billboard still hangs from the building's west façade. A new complaint through 311 was reported on March 26, 2007.

**442 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street:** In September 2006, DOB issued a \$2,500 fine and violations for the installation of an illegal billboard on 9<sup>th</sup> Street façade of this building at the corner of Avenue A. However, to date, the fine has not been paid, and the sign has not been removed. A new complaint regarding the billboard was registered through 311 on March 15, 2007, but this complaint has not yet been inspected. The sign is visible from within Tompkins Square Park, making its removal all the more urgent.

**76 Third Avenue:** In October 2006, a complaint was made through 311 regarding an illegal billboard on the side of this building, and DOB inspected the site on January 23, 2007. The DOB inspector determined that there is “No Action Necessary” because of a 1998 DOB permit (#101796148) for a 45’ X 52’ advertising sign on the side wall. This permit erroneously states that the property is zoned M1-5B, but the property is in fact situated within a C6-1 zone, where such a billboard would not be allowed.

Despite complaints issued to DOB through 311, the following illegal advertising signs are still awaiting inspection: **91 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 26 Second Avenue, 64 Third Avenue, 111 Third Avenue, and 59 Fourth Avenue.**

The presence of these illegal billboards only seems to encourage other building owners to take advantage of the lack of enforcement and install more billboards throughout the neighborhood. Decisive action against these billboards is necessary not only to ensure that they are removed, but also to send a clear message to other building owners in the East Village that illegal billboards are not tolerated by the Department of Buildings.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director

cc: Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer  
Councilmember Rosie Mendez  
Community Board 3  
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