



# GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

## Pier 40/St. John's Mega-Plan Faces Push for Landmark and Zoning Protections

### *GVSHP Demands Safeguards for Far West & South Village*

In response to the City beginning the approval process for a massive development on the 3-block St. John's Terminal site, which straddles Houston Street between Washington and West Streets, GVSHP has demanded no approvals be granted without

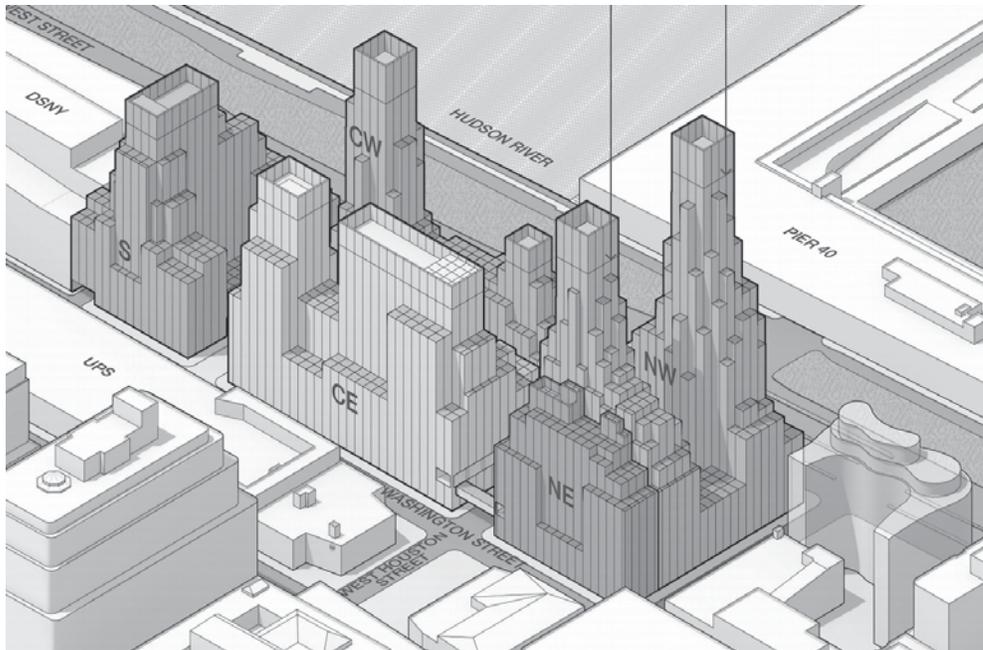
much-needed landmark and zoning protections for the nearby South Village and waterfront blocks from 14th Street to Canal Street.

The City is considering approving a rezoning and other actions that would allow a nearly 2 million sq. ft., five building complex on the site, with one tower reaching 480 ft. in height — taller than the Trump SoHo. The complex would be more than five times the size of the Trump SoHo, and include apartments, hotels, event space, and huge amounts of retail.

With all its downsides, the plan is not without its supporters, or its positives. A portion of the complex's size comes from the sale of air rights from neighboring Pier 40, generating \$100 million towards much-needed repair of its pilings, popular athletic fields, parking and infrastructure. Twenty-five percent of the apartments would be affordable, many reserved for seniors. And without the approvals being sought, a massive hotel/office/commercial development could still be built on the site that would generate no income for Pier 40 and the Hudson River Park, and would have no affordable housing.

But there's no denying that the approvals being offered by the City are a huge windfall for the developer, without a commensurate return for the public. The proposed project would have an enormous impact on the surrounding area, and the City has been unwilling to move on landmarking or rezoning proposals pushed by GVSHP to preserve the nearby unprotected area of the South Village south of Houston Street (over the last ten years, we have secured landmark protections for most of the South Village north of Houston Street).

Additionally, this project could be just the tip of the iceberg of oversized mega-developments enabled by air rights transfers from the Hudson River Park. In 2013, the State Legislature voted to allow all air rights from the park to be transferred anywhere one block inland, between



The proposed development on the St. John's Terminal site.

## Mayor's Oversized Rezoning Plan Beaten Back, Partly

### *Worst of Citywide Proposal Cut, But Problems Remain*

GVSHP has spent much of the last year helping to spearhead the fight against the Mayor's citywide rezoning plan, which proposed to gut many of the neighborhood zoning protections we fought years to achieve by lifting height limits for allowable new construction in certain residential areas.

We reached out to other communities to make common cause and turned out the troops for public hearings by community boards, the Manhattan Borough President, the City Planning Commission and the City Council. We helped frame the proposal as a "one-size-fits-all" top-down approach to local planning, and held press conferences and rallies to inform the public and mobilize or pressure public officials.

In the end, it clearly had an impact. We got many of the most onerous provisions eliminated from the plan, including reducing or eliminating the proposed height limit increases for market rate developments, and reducing height limit increases for those developments which include 20% affordable housing.

The result: in the Far West Village, we managed to more or less keep entirely intact the height limit protections we got for the area in 2005 and 2010.

In the East Village, which has a more complicated patchwork of zoning districts, we made significant headway—proposed height limit increases for market-rate developments were entirely eliminated. Thus sidestreets between 3rd



Avenue and Avenue D, along with narrow Avenue B, will be held largely harmless, and limits we helped secure in 2010 remain intact. However, on the East Village's avenues (other than Avenue B), and the blocks between 3rd and 4th Avenues, height limits we helped secure in 2010 and 2012 remain intact for market-rate developments, but height limits for developments that include 20% affordable housing will increase by 15 feet—down from the 25 feet the Mayor proposed.

This is a huge victory, though the losses in the East Village are troubling. The rezonings of that neighborhood we helped secure over the last six years have prevented much of the out-of-scale development we have seen in so many neighborhoods of late, and had started to see there as well. In response, GVSHP will be closely monitoring new developments in the area to ensure that the new height bonuses are not being granted if the legally-required affordable housing is not included.

The City also passed a provision establishing requirements for including a percentage

of affordable housing in all new residential developments in areas where the City does rezonings in the future. This may sound good, but the Mayor made the requirements dependent upon very large increases in the allowable size of new developments in order to trigger this provision. In other words, affordable housing requirements are dependent upon allowing new development to be significantly larger and taller than previously permitted.

This is a false and unnecessary link that will not help our city's affordability problems, but will damage the scale and sense of place of communities. For example, GVSHP has pushed for a rezoning of the University Place/Broadway Corridors to put in place reasonable height limits to prevent things like the planned 280 ft. tall condo tower on the Bowlmor Lanes site, while also including affordable housing provisions. The Mayor's response? No interest—because we are not proposing to increase the size of the allowable development, but rather to reasonably limit it.

The fight goes on.

## 1816 House Finally Landmarked

*After Forty-Six Year Wait Designation Follows GVSHP Push to Save Federal Houses, 'Backlog' Sites*

In April, we scored a victory fourteen, forty-six, or two hundred years in the making, depending on how you look at it. That's when the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated 57 Sullivan Street, just north of Broome Street, an individual New York City landmark. Built in 1816-1817, the two hundred year old Federal-style house is believed to be the oldest in the South Village, and one of the oldest surviving houses in Lower Manhattan.

57 Sullivan Street was special to us for many reasons. First, it's located in our proposed South Village Historic District, the first two phases of which the City mostly designated in 2010 and 2013, but the third and final phase of which (within which 57 Sullivan lies) they have stubbornly refused to designate (see article p.1). In 2013, GVSHP got this house and the rest of the South Village listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, which offers tax breaks and financial assistance for preservation and restoration, but does not require the building's preservation as city landmarking does.

Second, the house has been waiting a very long time for landmark designation, and it almost didn't happen -- twice. The house was first considered for landmark designation in 1970, and the Landmarks Preservation Commission was moving ahead with designation when the old Board of Estimate told them not to, and they withdrew their vote.

Then in late 2014 the City decided it wanted to take this and about a hundred other "backlog"

sites off its docket — sites under consideration for landmark designation for five years or more without a final determination by the Commission. This would have removed all preliminary protections these sites receive while under consideration for designation, leaving them vulnerable to demolition or compromise.



**57 Sullivan Street**

GVSHP and other preservation groups protested vehemently, and called instead for all hundred sites to be given hearings and a decision on whether or not to designate. To their credit, the City listened, and took our approach instead. Every site was heard, GVSHP presented strong evidence for the house's historic and

architectural significance, and 57 Sullivan Street was one of a few dozen chosen for landmark designation.

The Society actually had its eye on 57 Sullivan long before the City threatened to drop it from its docket. Documenting and protecting the rich array of federal (1790-1835) houses in Lower Manhattan has been a part of GVSHP's mission since 1996, as these special houses sprinkled throughout our neighborhoods represent the first architectural style of the newly-independent United States.

In 2002, GVSHP teamed up with the NY Landmarks Conservancy to propose 57 Sullivan Street as one of thirteen federal houses (the same number as the original colonies) for landmark designation. This led to 57 Sullivan being re-heard for designation in 2009, but with no action taken. But with this designation, ten of the thirteen have been designated, located in the East Village, the Financial District, and on MacDougal, Greenwich, and Leroy Streets.

We took the occasion of this designation to survey all the federal houses we have been able to help secure either individual landmark or historic district designation of over the last twenty years. We are proud to say the numbers total one hundred fourteen houses, and they are found throughout NoHo, Greenwich Village,

the East Village, and Hudson Square. Some are grand, some modest; some are pristinely intact, others highly altered over time. But all tell the story of the very first phase of our city's development, and all are worthy of preservation. To view the report containing all one hundred fourteen houses, see [gvshp.org/fedreport](http://gvshp.org/fedreport).

## Landmarked Sites On Jane, Gansevoort Streets Face Serious Threats

### *Proposals Show Landmark Designation Not The End of Preservation Fights*

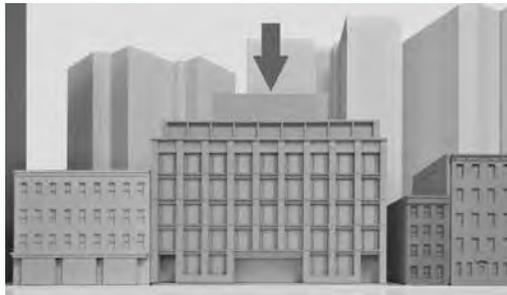
Landmark designation is an important tool to preserve our history and ensure changes match the character and context of their surroundings. But it does not mean no change will happen, as changes including demolition of 'non-contributing' buildings may be approved. Nor does it mean that the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), which decides what can be changed among landmarked properties, will always make the right decision.

The Commission's judgment is being put to the test right now with two new applications for inappropriately-designed, out-of-scale new developments at 85-89 Jane Street (Greenwich/Washington Streets) and 11-19 Jane Street (Greenwich Avenue/Hudson Street). GVSHP, neighbors, and the Community Board have come out strongly against both proposals, which will be heard at the LPC soon.

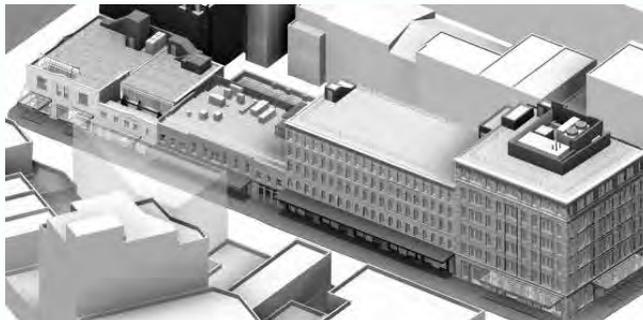
At 85-89 Jane, a 1-story and a 2-story commercial building are proposed to be combined, raised in height to 40 feet, and have 80 to 90 foot tall concrete and glass towers constructed in the rear as part of the site's transformation into a single-family mansion. The proposal keeps intact most of the façade of the existing buildings, which is good, and the facade additions, with modifications, could fit the context of the neighborhood. But the towering additions have no place on Jane Street or anywhere in the Greenwich Village Historic District, and would stick out like the proverbial sore thumb.



**Proposed development at 85 Jane Street**



**Proposed development at 11 Jane Street**



**Revised proposed development plans for Gansevoort Street**

At 11 Jane, a 1-story garage structure is proposed to be replaced by a 95 foot tall apartment building with a geometric grid of windows which, while handsome, could be anywhere, and looks more like an office building than an appropriate addition to this charming residential street. GVSHP is calling for rejection of the application based upon the overwhelming scale and the inappropriate character of the façade. Both Jane Street applications will be heard this summer, and we strongly encourage public participation. See [gvshp.org/jane](http://gvshp.org/jane) for information.

On Gansevoort Street, the LPC cut the baby in half in response to a developer's request to demolish two buildings and replace them with dramatically larger ones, and nearly triple a third in height. While the LPC will allow the demolition of the two buildings, they will not allow the replacement buildings to go quite as high as requested by the developer, and are requiring reductions in the height of the proposed additions to the third building. GVSHP had called for preservation of the existing buildings and (at most) modest, set back additions on top, as traditionally has occurred in this area.

We were disappointed by the Commission's willingness to allow the developer to go so far, but gratified that our advocacy helped keep them from going further. We and allies Save Gansevoort are now grappling with the LPC and the developer over exactly how high the new buildings and additions will be permitted to go, citing historic building research we have done to advocate for the smallest possible allowances.

## Good News: 43 MacDougal

For nearly ten years, GVSHP has been fighting to get this landmarked 1846 house at King Street restored. A disinterested owner for years allowed the abandoned corner structure to rot, attracting mold, vermin, and vagrants, threatening the safety and well-being of the historic structure and its neighbors. GVSHP pushed the City to take legal action against the owners to repair and maintain the building.

A few years ago a new owner promised to restore the building, to which we responded with cautious optimism. We supported their application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to make minor changes and bring the building back to its original charming glory.

We are pleased to report that after two years of work, the renovation is complete, all scaffolding has been removed, and 43 MacDougal once again shines as a lovely historic gem. Sometimes there are happy endings!



43 MacDougal Street post-renovations



Marlis Momber

## New Oral History: Marlis Momber

Our ever-growing oral history collection scored a fantastic new addition earlier this year when world-renowned East Village photographer Marlis Momber's interview with GVSHP came on line. Momber, a native of Germany who came to the East Village/Lower East Side in 1975, is known for her stark and dramatic documentation of the squatter, art, punk, and Latino cultural scene in this neighborhood over the last three decades. In her interview with GVSHP, available on our website, Momber discusses gentrification, abandonment, New York in the 1970's, and the similarities between the Lower East Side and her native Berlin.

Momber's oral history joins more than forty others on the GVSHP website, conducted over the last twenty years. Other interviewees range from Jane Jacobs to Richard Meier, Merce Cunningham to Jonas Mekas, with collections including Preservation Pioneers, the founding of Westbeth, and the South and East Village. Check them all out at [gvshp.org/oralhistory](http://gvshp.org/oralhistory).

## Stonewall and Julius': LGBT History Progress

GVSHP has helped make great strides in recognizing and protecting LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered) history in our neighborhood, where some of the world's most significant LGBT historic sites are found. In 1999 GVSHP helped get the Stonewall Inn named the first site ever on the National Registers of Historic Places for LGBT history, and in 2015 we successfully spearheaded the drive to make it the first site ever to receive NYC landmark designation for that same reason. Now we are supporting efforts to have the Inn and surroundings designated a National Historic Monument or Park by President Obama, which would give the National Parks Service an added role and responsibility for their preservation and interpretation to the public. The President is expected to approve the move this summer.

At Julius' Bar at 159 West 10th Street, GVSHP got the site ruled eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places in 2013, based upon the 1966 'Sip In' which took place here. This was one of the very first planned acts of civil disobedience for LGBT rights, modeled on 'sit-ins' held in the South, and helped overturn New York State regulations which in essence made gay bars or other establishments catering to gay people illegal and subject to closure. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the event, GVSHP is pushing for NYC landmark designation, and co-hosted a celebration on site re-enacting the original sip in with two of the original participants. The City has not, so far, agreed to landmark designation.



## City Council Intro. 775 Rears Ugly Head Again

### *Anti-Landmarking Bill Returns; Revised, But Still Awful*

Intro. 775, the landmarks “do-or-die-deadline” bill, has returned. Introduced by City Councilmembers David Greenfield and Peter Koo, the bill would make landmarking harder and demolition of historic properties easier by automatically deeming proposed landmarks and historic districts ineligible for landmark designation if the Landmarks Preservation Commission does not vote within a prescribed timeframe.

The short timeframe—one year for individual landmarks, and two for historic districts—is considerably less than the amount of time it took to landmark many of our city’s most beloved landmarks and historic districts, including the

Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, Grand Central Terminal, and the Greenwich Village, St. Mark’s, and SoHo Cast-Iron Historic Districts. In fact, more than half our city’s landmarked properties did not meet the deadlines Intro. 775 would now impose.

After a huge public outcry against the bill which GVSHP helped lead, the sponsors agreed to amend it. They did eliminate one of the most onerous provisions in the bill, a requirement that if a building or district were not voted on within the required timeframe, they could not be reconsidered for another five years.

While we are glad this was jettisoned, the bill still allows developers to get demolition permits directly following a building being removed from the list of landmarks under consideration. As it takes only hours to get such a permit, not five years, the change is woefully insufficient to ensure the preservation of worthy historic sites.

As we go to press, the bill is headed towards a quickly scheduled vote in the City Council. We are working closely with fellow preservation organizations and City Councilmembers Mendez, Johnson, and Kallos to fight it. Find out more at [gvshp.org/775](http://gvshp.org/775).

**Many of our most beloved landmarks took longer to designate than Intro. 775 would allow, such as (l. to r.) the Woolworth Building, Rockefeller Center, and the Empire State Building.**



### *Pier 40/St. John's (continued from front page)*

59th and Chambers Streets, including the Village. The air rights from Pier 40 in the St. John’s plan amount to only 15% of the estimated total air rights that could be moved from the park into neighborhoods like ours, vastly increasing the amount of development we could face.

Therefore GVSHP has demanded any approvals be paired with 1) long overdue landmark and/or zoning protections for unprotected areas of the neighboring South Village, which have faced out-of-scale development and accelerating loss of low-scale, historic buildings, 2) measures that would limit or restrict future air rights transfers from the Park between 14th and Canal Streets, to close the Pandora’s Box of potential overdevelopment opened by the State Legislature in 2013, and 3) a dramatic reduction in the size, amount, and type of allowable retail space in the proposed development, to prohibit big box stores and limit traffic-generating “destination retail,” favoring instead smaller stores serving local communities and a supermarket.

We had a huge and enthusiastic turnout at the initial community board hearing in May calling for these measures. The proposal will go to the Borough President, the City Planning Commission, and finally the City Council for approval. We have been working closely with Councilmember Corey Johnson, in whose district St. John’s lies, to try to secure these changes to the plan and added neighborhood protections.

For more info and to help, see [gvshp.org/Pier40](http://gvshp.org/Pier40).

## From the Director

This May marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Jane Jacobs, a woman whose life and work inspires much of what we do at GVSHP. Jane was a longtime member of GVSHP's Board of Advisors, and generously conducted an oral history with us. In 2006 after she died, GVSHP got the street outside her home on Hudson Street renamed 'Jane Jacobs Way,' and joined the *Center for the Living City* to host the public celebration of her life in Washington Square Park, at which her son Ned came from Canada to speak. On May 5th of this year, what would have been her 100th birthday, we held a panel discussion on Jane's impact and legacy with experts in the field.

Perhaps most importantly, we work every day to try to live up to Jane Jacobs' ideal of a diverse, healthy community and city that preserves its history, values small businesses, and promotes grass-roots rather than top-down planning.

Spurred on by Jane's vision, GVSHP has fought for and secured landmark designation of more than 1,100 buildings and contextual rezonings of nearly 100 blocks of our neighborhood. We promote small businesses through our Business of the Month program, annual Village Awards, and advocacy for small business preservation measures. And every day we connect the public to the process of shaping the future of their neighborhoods through education, advocacy and daily vigilant monitoring and review of proposed demolitions, new construction, and alterations of the built environment of our neighborhoods.

With all that's going on in our city now, Jane Jacob's bright vision is needed more than ever. We are fighting to nourish that flame. I hope you'll join us.



## Acknowledgements

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## GVSHP Bulletin Board

**Join our e-mail list** for alerts on critical preservation and development issues—[gvshp.org/email](http://gvshp.org/email).

**Help the cause by volunteering**—[gvshp.org/volunteer](http://gvshp.org/volunteer).

**Buy the Book! *Greenwich Village Stories*** is a love letter to Greenwich Village and the East Village featuring works of sixty-six artists, writers, and neighborhood icons, with beautiful photos and artwork. All proceeds support GVSHP. See [gvshp.org/gvstories](http://gvshp.org/gvstories).

**Visit GVSHP's blog *Off the Grid*** for fun and fascinating glimpses into our neighborhoods' hidden history, eye-catching architecture, and colorful characters—see [gvshp.org/blog](http://gvshp.org/blog).

**Get with the Program!** Upcoming lectures, book talks, walking tours, and panel discussions are listed at [gvshp.org/programs](http://gvshp.org/programs); past program videos are at [gvshp.org/pastprograms](http://gvshp.org/pastprograms).

**Want to know about landmarks applications in your neighborhood?** See proposed changes to landmarked buildings in our neighborhoods, when hearings and votes will take place, how you can testify, and sign up for alerts about the application—[gvshp.org/lpc](http://gvshp.org/lpc).

**Learn about 1,100 buildings** GVSHP has helped get landmarked since 2003—[gvshp.org/10](http://gvshp.org/10).

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

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232 East 11th Street, New York, NY 10003

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