



**Greenwich  
Village  
Society for  
Historic  
Preservation**

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January 22, 2009

Dear Community Board Member:

**Tonight the Board will vote on several requested zoning variances at 437-451 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street to allow construction of a 215 ft. tall building with 30,000 sq. ft. of big box retail space – 55% larger, with three times the size retail space, of what the zoning for the Meatpacking District allows. I strongly urge you to vote AGAINST the requested variances.** The Zoning Committee approved the requested variances, but asked that the increase in allowable building size be reduced from 55% to 27% -- still an enormous amount, which we do not believe should be granted.

**The proposed development is completely inappropriate for this neighborhood, and would set troubling precedents.** It would overwhelm the largely low-rise, historic Meatpacking District with its enormous scale. Even more troubling, the proposed design is totally at odds with the neighborhood -- ***a glass skyscraper on three sides with a completely blank, windowless 215 ft. tall north wall that will face the Gansevoort Market Historic District which it directly abuts.*** The 30,000 sq. ft. of big box retail the developer is seeking would also completely change the character of, and traffic patterns in, this neighborhood.

**The developer claims that the High Line bisecting the site and forcing him to build narrower floorplates beside it creates a "hardship," preventing a "reasonable return" on the property, necessitating these variances. This is completely unfounded.** In fact, the directly adjacent presence of the High Line, which will be one of New York's premiere parks and attractions, will only ***increase the development's value and profitability.*** Other developers have been able to build nearby with similar sized floorplates without claiming "hardship," and without getting the vastly increased bulk and retail space being sought here.

**The buildings which would be demolished for the proposed development are historic market buildings within the Gansevoort Market State and National Register Historic District; CB2 endorsed their being landmarked; and at least one was originally proposed for landmarking by the City until heavy lobbying by the applicant persuaded them otherwise** (see attached maps). All the buildings which would be demolished for this development were originally included in the proposed Gansevoort Market Historic District (as endorsed by many community groups and Community Board #2). 437 West 13th Street was included in the historic district proposed by the City as well, but was removed after heavy lobbying by the owner/applicant. Had the buildings remained in, the proposed demolition would not be possible.

**Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions about this. I hope you will oppose the proposed variances for 437-451 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street.**

Sincerely,

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director