“After the Kimmel Center”: Tackling Zoning and Institutional Development

Construction of the Kimmel Center on Washington Square South was a particularly sad sight when it became clear that this huge new building, opposed by GVSHP and many in the community, would forever block the view south along Fifth Avenue through Washington Square Arch. The building, considered "as-of-right" under current law, provided a case study in how our zoning system often fails to protect our neighborhoods.

GVSHP chose not to take the situation lying down. In the spring, we held a forum and panel discussion bringing together preservationists, planners, government officials and community leaders -- and attended by nearly 200 people -- to shed light on the flaws in the current system, and try to identify possible solutions. Following the forum and a summer of continued on page six

Gansevoort Market Proposal Comes Down to the Wire

Our Save Gansevoort Market effort started the year with a commitment by LPC Chair Sherida Pauzlen to take action on our proposal for historic district designation by the latter half of 2002. As we go to press, the Commission has agreed to review our proposal, submitted in September, and we hope to have a hearing on the proposal calendared shortly thereafter. Support for our campaign has continued to grow over the past several months, with a strong endorsement coming recently from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and more than 5,000 postcards sent from individuals to the City in support of designation of the district. A 28-page self-guided Gansevoort Market Walking Tour booklet, promoting the area’s history and the need for its preservation, was distributed to preservationists, government officials, community leaders, and supporters (to get a copy, call or e-mail us, or drop by our office).

This progress is critical because of the speed with which development projects are moving forward in the district. While the local community board was working with the city to turn the parking lot site at Hudson and 13th Streets into a staging area for water tunnel construction (thus preserving the possibility of the site’s eventual conversion to park use, and preventing development there in the near future), the owner has moved ahead with a plan to construct a 14-story, aluminum-clad hotel on the lot. We are working with our local elected officials and Community Board to see if the city acted appropriately in forgoing this site for the staging area, thus allowing the development. The proposed 400-foot tall luxury apartment tower at continued on page five

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Drawing to a close on my first year as GVSHP’s Executive Director, it is a little hard to believe how much has happened since January 1, and how much still needs to be done.

We began the year with a promise from the Landmarks Preservation Commission to act upon our proposal for a Gansevoort Market Historic District by year’s end. As we have submitted our final research to the LPC, they are currently looking at our proposal and, we hope, will be calendaring it for a hearing soon thereafter. This summer, we secured a determination of eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for the Gansevoort Market area, the first new area of Greenwich Village to qualify in over a generation. And while this success bodes well for our efforts, these next few months will certainly be crucial in deciding whether or not New York City historic district designation is extended to this area, the first such extension in Greenwich Village since 1969. GVSHP also took a lead role in response to proposals by PATH and Cooper Union for projects which, we believe, would have significant impacts upon our neighborhood’s most precious resources. Even with some hopeful signs, however, the fate of both projects remains up in the air, and will undoubtedly require further attention and energy from the Society, in the fall and beyond. And while we were saddened to see the new Kimmel Center rising on Washington Square South, GVSHP will be working with community groups and elected officials in the coming months on improving conditions in Washington Square Park, and are presenting recommendations for zoning changes to prevent more Kimmel Centers from happening in the future.

GVSHP has been able to rise to meet these new challenges, and grow to address these new demands placed upon our community. This past spring our children’s education program had its highest enrollment ever, but fortunately GVSHP has been able to identify some new and very generous sources of support to meet the new demand. And while we must face critical issues threatening areas in the South and East Village, we are also working with new local groups to do so, building coalitions and tapping new sources for participation in our
GVSHP Weighs in on Preservation Legislation

GVSHP took a lead role this spring and summer on several key legislative battles with far-reaching ramifications for preservation and landmarking efforts.

This year’s City budget once again cut funding to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which has already been slashed considerably since the early 1990’s. While the LPC does much with little, their enforcement and research departments have shrunken considerably, and their survey department is now defunct. Without these resources, the LPC can neither implement enforcement measures nor pursue new designations with the speed and vigor one would ideally hope to see. Additionally, the city budget proposed imposing for the first time ever fees for property owners to receive permits for work from the LPC. This unfairly penalizes compliant historic property owners for obeying landmarks law, and will, we fear, only increase violations. The irony is that this measure has been proposed as a revenue generator for the City, while the additional bureaucracy, increased violations, and compromised integrity of historic districts will undoubtedly only end up costing the City much more than the fees bring in.

In response to a GVSHP action alert, Society members flooded City Hall with letters and postcards opposed to these plans. GVSHP testified before the City Council against the proposals, and at our request, many of our local elected officials, including Assembly Member Deborah Glick and State Senator Tom Duane, lobbied the Mayor on these matters as well. While the City’s looming budget deficit ultimately convinced the Council to approve the LPC budget cut, the cut approved was, at least, one of the smallest for any city agency. Also, while the City remained committed to pursuing the fees for LPC permits, they have since held back from implementing the system pending a more thorough public review, promising to consider impacts upon compliance and small property owners before moving forward. This will allow GVSHP and our members further opportunity to comment should any plan materialize, and we will keep you informed of any such developments.

GVSHP also lobbied our State leaders in support of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Act, a bill which would have provided tax credits for qualified rehabilitation expenditures made with respect to historic homes. All of the Village’s state legislators expressed support for the bill, which as we went to press had passed the Senate but not the Assembly. GVSHP also joined the campaign in support of increased funding for the Federal Historic Preservation Fund, which supports programs at the state, federal, and local level in support of historic preservation efforts. Particularly critical is the funding for our State Historic Preservation Office, which is charged with identifying sites and areas for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places, and for monitoring and evaluating any proposed changes to these districts utilizing state or federal funds (the Greenwich Village and Stonewall districts are already listed on the Register, while the Gansevoort Market district has recently been deemed eligible for it; see PATH and Gansevoort articles). At press time the House had approved the funding increase measure, but the Senate had not.

Spread the word about GVSHP, and build support for our efforts.

If you are involved with any civic, community or social groups, and would like GVSHP to come to speak to them about our work, please call or e-mail our office to arrange it. GVSHP welcomes the opportunity to meet and work with interested organizations and individuals.
Upcoming GVSHP Programs

Tuesday, September 24th, 7:00 p.m.
Book Reading with David Carter
The Stonewall Riots
Free to all. Reservations required. Call 212/475-9585.
The Gay Community Center, 208 West 13th Street.

Author David Carter will give the first public reading from Stonewall, his history of the Stonewall Riots, to be published next year by St. Martin's Press. This book is the result of ten years of research, during which Carter researched archives from San Francisco to Amsterdam, interviewed witnesses, and cross-checked era documents. A question and answer period will follow the book reading.

Saturday, October 5th, 1:00 p.m.
Walking Tour with Arthur Marks
Walt Whitman's Greenwich Village
$12 for members, $15 for non-members.
For reservations and meeting place, call 212/475-9585.

Walt Whitman, the great poet of 19th Century America, lived in Brooklyn during the first part of his life, but spent much time in Manhattan in the years before the Civil War. This tour follows the same path Whitman often took as he traversed the city. The tour will start at the site of the Whitman House, once a literary haunt, and meander thought Greenwich Village, one of the neighborhoods Whitman visited. Architectural historian and raconteur Arthur Marks leads this literary tour.

Thursday, October 24th, 7:00 p.m.
Book Reading and Slide Show with Judith Stonehill
The Exhilarating Proximity of Artists, Writers, Bohemians, and Bohemian Spirits in Greenwich Village
Free to all. Reservations required. Call 212/475-9585.
The Pen and Brush Club, 16 East 10th Street.

Join Judith Stonehill, past president of GVSHP and author of the new book Greenwich Village: A Guide to America’s Legendary Left Bank, as she reads selections from and expands on the stories in her book about the Village’s extraordinary heritage of artists, writers, and rebels during the century between the 1890s and 1940s. An accompanying slide show offers the chance to view rare photographs of Greenwich Village’s creative past.

For additional information on any of GVSHP’s upcoming programs, please call 212/475-9585 or go to our website at www.gvshp.org.

PATH Battle Continues

This spring the Port Authority announced plans to build new entrances for its Christopher Street and 9th Street PATH stations. Unfortunately, the new locations were slated for Christopher Street at Waverly Place and at Bedford Street, narrow side streets with fragile 19th century structures of historic significance. The GVSHP felt this was a serious setback.

Additionally, the proposed locations are in the Greenwich Village and Stonewall Historic Districts, areas listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These locations are therefore entitled to a high degree of protection and a full review of the impact on their historic integrity of any project using State or Federal funds.

GVSHP immediately questioned the appropriateness of the plan, and, along with a coalition of neighborhood groups, brought these historic and preservation concerns to every level of government, from the Mayor and Governor to the federal agencies partly funding the project. The objections clearly had an impact, as work has halted on the project and the application for federal funding of the program is in limbo after federal agencies expressed strong concerns about the appropriateness of the project and its impact. With this crippling (if not decisive) blow, the Port Authority has announced that they are looking at other "natives" to the announced plans and "going back to the beginning point" to review their original proposal.

GVSHP sits on a task force charged with reviewing any new plans put forth by the Port Authority. We will push to ensure that no plan goes forward without first addressing concerns about impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, and will be vigilant to help ensure that any future work done in association with the project does not damage existing buildings.

South and East Village
Unprotected, but Worthy

Left out when Greenwich Village was designated an historic district in 1969 was the South Village and most of the East Village. These areas, generally south of West 4th Street between Seventh Avenue South and LaGuardia Place, and east of Third Avenue (respectively), contain some of the Village’s and New York’s finest and oldest federal and early 19th century rowhouses, and a stunning array of 19th and early 20th century tenements. Long overlooked by historians and architectural preservationists, these tenements tell a fascinating story of immigrant life and the evolution of working class housing, as well as often including carefully wrought, intricate architectural details. These areas are also rich in more recent cultural history, serving as the center of New York’s folk revival of the 60’s and 70’s, as well as other artistic and literary movements which grew out of the beatnik and hippie movements.

South and East Village also face threats to their preservation. Institutional development along Washington Square South, Astor Place and Third Avenue, as well as an increasing amount of private development, threatens to eat away at these neighborhoods’ character and integrity.

Additionally, insensitive renovations can unnecessarily eliminate irreplaceable ornament and detailing. Without historic district protections, architectural details and whole buildings which make an important contribution to a city’s historic fabric can be lost, while what replaces them may bear little relationship to their surroundings. The Society has made it a priority to protect these important areas. Working continued on page five

GRANTS PROVIDE CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR SOCIETY PROGRAMS

GVSHP received crucial commitments of support this year to continue and expand our preservation programs. Included in the city’s 2003 Budget, passed in June, was a $10,000 grant for GVSHP secured by Council Member Christine Quinn, and a $2,500 grant secured by Council Member Alan Gorsern. New York State’s 2003 budget, passed in May, included a $8,000 grant for GVSHP secured by State Senator Martin Connor, and a $2,500 grant secured by State Senator Tom Duane. We are incredibly grateful to each of them, not only for their funding support, but for the support they provide for our work throughout the year. Noted designer Marc Jacobs made GVSHP the beneficiary of a $5000 grant earlier this year which will substantially aid our outreach and advocacy efforts.

The New York State Council on the Arts and the Kaplen Foundation each made substantial grants to our Sune Gansoewoer Market Project, allowing it to vigorously carry on its advocacy efforts throughout the coming year.

Additionally, the Manhattan delegation of the City Council secured a $5,000 grant, and the T.J. White Fund, administered by NYPL, dispensed a $1,500 grant, for our Children’s Education program. This funding is especially critical now, as our Children’s Education program had its most popular semester ever, with over 500 students participating in the program. As we continue to try to provide more children and adults with education and programming opportunities dealing with history and historic preservation, and as community-based education and preservation needs in our neighborhoods continue to grow, this support is critical to ensuring that GVSHP can fulfill its mission of promoting neighborhood preservation and protecting the special architectural and cultural heritage of the Village.
Ganevseot Market Proposal Comes Down to the Wire

cast from page one

848 Washington Street (at 13th Street) is scheduled for a new hearing before the City in October. These and other addi-
tions, alterations, and development pro-
jects proposed and ongoing in Ganevseot speak to the urgent need to put historic dis-
tict designations in place, so that any fu-
ture changes in the neighborhood are compatible with the existing built environment.

In another critical development, in July the Ganevseot Market district was, at our re-
quest, deemed eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places. The determination of eligibility cited Ganevseot’s historic and architec-
tural significance, bolstering our case for dis-
triict designation with the city. The finding of eligibility also now mandates a review process for any projects using State or Federal money in the district to ensure that they do not have a negative impact upon the historic character of the area. It is also the critical next step toward securing a listing for the district on the National Register, which provides tax breaks and other incentives to commercial property owners to maintain the historic character of their buildings. We are proud to report that this is also the first new area of Greenwich Village to be determined eli-
gible for listing on the National Register in over a generation.

Our Save Ganevseot Market project spent much of the spring and summer gathering research and documentation about the district’s unique history as a cen-
ter of industry and transportation, which will be presented to the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the State Historic Preservation Office to further our case for designation. Additionally, the Task Force has been in conversation with the Department of City Planning and the Department of Business Services about preserving the unique mix of uses and businesses in the district. It is our hope to preserve not just the shells of Ganevseot’s buildings, but its character and feeling, and we hope to work with these other agencies to help maintain the balance of industry and commerce, work and play which currently characterizes the neighborhood.

South and East Village Unprotected, but Worthy

continued from page four

with local community groups such as the South Village Landmarking Alliance and the Coalition to Save the East Village, with citywide preservation organizations such as the Historic Districts Council and the Landmarks Conservancy, and with participation from institutions such as NYU, GVSHP has spent much of the summer gathering data and documenta-
tion about underdesignated areas of these two neighborhoods.

Extending protections to the South and East Village will be critical not only to their future, but to the future of preserva-
tion in New York City as well. In the first generation of the preservation movement, areas such as these were often overlooked; working-class structures without pretense or many amenities were, in spite of their*

SAVE GANEVSOET MARKET
POSTCARDS

Please be sure to send in your postcards to Mayor Bloomberg and the Landmarks Preservation Commission in support of design-
ating the Ganevseot Market Historic District. If you don’t have one or would like more (for yourself, or to distribute to friends and neigh-
bors), please call or e-mail us.

**GOOD NEWS!* 

As we go to press, we have been informed by the Landmarks Preservation Commission that the application to demolish the one-story build-
ing at 26 Greenwich Avenue and replace it with a 3-storied apartment building has been withdrawn. The project, which faced enormous opposition, would have loomed over the Jefferson Market Garden and the neighbor-
ing three-story houses of West 10th Street and Patchen Place. A happy outcome, show-
ing the power of preservation can be heard!