Gansevoort Market Historic District Finally Gets its Day!

On March 18, after a heated two and a half year effort by GVSHP's Save Gansevoort Market project, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a hearing on our Gansevoort Market historic district! Over 100 people, including building owners, businesses, elected officials, preservationists, community leaders, and scores of residents came to show support for the proposed designation. We are told it was one of the largest turnouts ever in support of a proposed historic district. If enacted, the Gansevoort Market historic district would be the first (though hopefully not the last) expansion of historic district protections in Greenwich Village since 1969!

The proposed district was not voted on by the Commission at this hearing (districts are rarely voted on at first hearing), so we will be lobbying the Commission to vote as soon as possible. If approved, the district must then be approved by the City Planning Commission and the City Council. In anticipation of this, we have already met with the City Planning Commission Chair, and, with the support and assistance of City Council Member continued on page six

Advancing an Agenda To Stop Institutional Overdevelopment

Changing the way the City regulates "community facilities" - allowing hospitals and universities to build substantially larger than any other buildings around them, for instance - has long been on GVSHP's agenda. Catalyzed by the debacle of the NYU Kimmel Center on Washington Square South, however, GVSHP has generated a plan calling for specific changes to the zoning code to end this abuse, helped form a citywide coalition to advocate for reform of the city's community facility regulations, and has begun lobbying and meeting with the citywide officials who will ultimately determine if these outdated regulations stay or go.

Following the September publication of our "After the Kimmel Center" report on zoning reform and neighborhood preservation (view it on our website at http://www.preserve.org/gvshp/kimmell.htm or call the GVSHP office for a copy), in October GVSHP co-organized and hosted the first meeting of the Citywide Coalition for Community Facility Reform, consisting of over 50 groups from across continued on page six
Meat Market Hi-Rise Stopped (For Now)

After a pitched battle lasting almost 2 years, in March the plan for a 32-story, 450 foot tall luxury residential hi-rise in the Meatpacking district, at 848 Washington Street, was defeated. This grossly inappropriate tower would have not only destroyed the scale and feel of our proposed historic district, but inevitably resulted in the meat and other long-standing businesses being forced out of the neighborhood, due to the inherent conflicts which would result between residential uses and these loud (and in many cases odorous) businesses being located right next door to one another.

At the final hearing before the Board of Standards and Appeals on the variance request for this residential tower (zoning prohibits residential uses in the Gansevoort Meat Market), over 100 people, many of them GVSHP and Save Gansevoort Market members and supporters, turned out to express ardent opposition to the plan. We were also joined by State Senator Tom Duane, City Council Member Christine Quinn, and representatives of the Borough President, Congress Member Nadler, Assembly Member Glick, the Historic Districts Council, and many other neighborhood, preservation, merchant and business groups. Hundreds of letters were also sent to the BSA by our members, and at our request, groups as far-ranging as the Flower Market Association and Heritage of Pride lobbied against the plan. M-1-5, an association of neighborhood residents and businesses opposing the plan, and Save Gansevoort Market Co-Chairs Florent Morellet and Jo Hamilton, deserve special credit for their critical role organizing and maintaining the sustained, successful campaign.

Due to the overwhelming opposition, just a few days before the scheduled March 25 decision date, the applicant withdrew his variance request, apparently expecting defeat. The developer has since stated that if he cannot develop a residential building, he will pursue an "as-of-right" hotel development. GVSHP/SGM has lobbied the City to change the zoning of the area to exclude hotel development, and, unfortunately, the site was one of several west of Washington Street proposed for inclusion in the historic district by GVSHP/SGM but which was left out by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. We will continue to closely monitor this and any other sites in the area for inappropriate development plans.

GVSHP Launches “Preservation Watch” Program

Did you know that cuts to City agencies like the Landmarks Preservation Commission mean that there are so few inspectors that they can only examine critical work if they receive complaints suggesting improper work may be taking place? GVSHP members and neighborhood residents have always played a critical role in GVSHP’s preservation work, but some recent events have proved how critical our members’ eyes and ears can be, especially in circumstances like these.

In January, the GVSHP office was informed by a vigilant neighbor that Con Ed was doing work on Gansevoort Street resulting in the destruction of dozens of historic Belgian block paving stones ("cobblestones"). GVSHP immediately demanded Con Ed halt the work and repair the damage, and called upon the continued on page three
GVSHP Launches Preservation Watch Program

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City, which issued the permit allowing the work, to stop in order to address the problem. Both Can Ed and the City admitted the work had been done improperly, and had caused repairs made to the remaining stones. Prompted by this, GVSHP proposed a change in the City’s regulations governing how repairs on streets with historic paving stones are done, which has since been supported by many of our local elected officials, with legislation to address this problem being proposed at the City Council.

Last fall, a GVSHP member brought to our attention work at 305 West 11th Street, which resulted in this building and neighboring 311 West 11th Street having to be vacated, with prominent cracks forming in the facades of the buildings. GVSHP called on the owner to make necessary repairs as soon as possible, and pushed the City to demand action to be taken when work had gone and inaction meant weather that a lack of structural shoring up of the buildings gave rise to fears of further damage or collapse. Though the situation is far from over, long-delayed shoring up and repairs have begun, and GVSHP will continue to closely monitor the situation.

Without the vigilance of neighbors and concerned residents, GVSHP might not have been brought into these situations, and proper repairs and responses might never have happened. That is why we are launching our “Preservation Watch” program. Landmarks violations which go unreported and are not repaired can cause permanent damage to the integrity of the structure. Now, with a few simple clicks of your mouse, you can go to our website, at www.gvshp.org, and by clicking on “Reporting Landmarks Violations,” you can get the name, phone number, and e-mail address of the violator in the Landmarks Preservation Commission for reporting possible violations, or connect directly to the LPC Complaint form which can be sent directly to LPC. Additionally, we have also posted directly on our website maps of all current and pending historic districts in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and Noho, with street addresses, so you can tell if a building is located within a historic district and therefore regulated by LPC.

If you cannot access our website, you can also report any possible violations to our office at 212/475-5985 x38 (and in fact, we encourage you to forward any complaints to LPC as well so we can follow up and help ensure that no one is being taken advantage of if their property is protected. If you think work may be in violation of landmarks law, look to see if there is a permit posted from the Landmarks Preservation Commission for the work being done (it should be right next to the Buildings Department permit). You can also call the GVSHP office or the LPC to ask if work you are seeing may be in violation, although it can only be determined once a permit for the work has been inspected.

Announcements of this new program have gone to all GVSHP members, local block associations and community boards, elected officials, and local papers. Please help spread the word, to support efforts to preserve the special historic character of our neighborhoods.

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO FUNDERS AND DONORS

In these very difficult economic times, the extreme magnanimity of generous individuals, foundations, grantors, and government officials have made a tremendous difference in allowing the Society to continue its advocacy, education, and programming work.

Among government officials, we would like to thank City Council Member Christine Quinn, Council Member Margaret Lopez, the Manhattan Delegation of the City Council, State Senator Martin Connor, Council Member Alan Gerson, and State Senator Tom Duane for their invaluable assistance in securing and providing grants.

We would also like to thank the New York Community Trust, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the T.G. White Fund and NYU for their generous grant support, and Oppeheimer Capital and Allianz PCS for their donations of office equipment.

Lastly, but certainly not least, we would like to thank our GVSHP patrons, Alexander Kaplen, Margaret Kaplen, and the Kaplan Foundation; Andrew Paul; James Wilentz and Robin Maxwell; Fred Wistow and the Oppenheimer Funds Legacy Program; Sarah O’Neil and Barry Munkers; and the Kite Key Foundation; Elizabeth Gilmore; Jonathan Russo and Deborah Grayson; F. Anthony Zinnolo and Sally Auer; Frank and Mary Ann Arisman; Arnie Thalacker and Deborah Barnett; Penelope Barcus; David Burger; Jonathan Greenburg and Elizabath Ely; William and Jo Hamilton; Arthur Lewi; Ruth and Kevin McCoy; Mark Nelkin and the Vanguard Charitable Endowment; James Stewart Polshek and Polshek Partnership; Eileen Rother; Alan G. Strauss and Katherine Schoonover; Kenneth and Katherine Snelson and the Jewish Communal Fund; Judith and John Jay Stoneloth; Henry Van Ameringen and the Van Ameringen Foundation; and Jean Claude van Italie and the van Italie Foundation.

NEW LANDMARKS CHAIR ROBERT TIERNEY

GVSHP was delighted that among his first acts on the Landmarks Preservation Commission, newly appointed Chair Robert Tierney attended the LPC’s community meeting regarding the proposed Gansevoort historic district in December, and met with GVSHP Executive Director Andrew Berman, GVSHP Board President F. Anthony Zinnolo, and Save Gansevoort Market Co-Chair Jo Hamilton in January. The new Chair is a longtime Village resident with a clear love of Greenwich Village, and has certainly made himself open and available to GVSHP and our issues. We look forward to a productive and hopefully close working relationship with the new Chair, who certainly made a very good impression by making the calendaring of hearings on the proposed Gansevoort Market historic district, as well as the Noho East Historic district, among other things (that we are addressing) also go out to outgoing LPC Chair Sheila Paulson, who worked very hard on these two proposals as well.

When we meet with the new Chair in January, we raised several issues that we wished them to consider as possible:

• Designation of the proposed Gansevoort Market historic district as soon as possible
• Expanding historic district protections in the Far West Village and along the Greenwich Village waterfront
• Working with GVSHP and local advocates as we develop a new and comprehensive plan for the South Village historic district, and ensuring that no historic buildings, including federal rowhouses at 126-131 MacDougal Street and the neighboring Provincetown Playhouse, are lost while the proposal is being developed.
• Working with GVSHP and local advocates to expand protections for the myriad historic resources in the East Village
• Re-establishing, as quickly as possible, the task force consisting of the LPC Chair and staff and advocates from Community Board #2 (Greenwich Village, Soho, Noho) to advance landmarking proposals
• Working with GVSHP to help change Department of Transportation regulations which in all restoration of historic stops removes an oinment of a right of access for widened sidewalks, and to impose regulations which will too frequently allow the destruction of historic cobblestones.

GVSHP will continue to pursue all of these issues throughout the year.

Join the Society/Order GVSHP Gifts

New membership benefits include a 28 page self-guided walking tour booklet of Gansevoort Market; invitations to attend our many lectures, symposia, discussions series and walking tours; free access to the Society’s research sources; regular issues of our newsletter; and a free six-month subscription to The Village newspaper. Most importantly, your support will help to protect the Village by making GVSHP a more effective preservation leader. The Society also invites members to give gift memberships to your friends or neighbors for only $25 (that’s half price). Please use the form below, and we will send a lovely gift pocket folder informing them of your thoughtful gift.

YES I would like to support the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and its preservation efforts.

[ ] $51,000 Patron [ ] $250 Sustainer [ ] $25 Family/Individual

[ ] $500 Sustainer [ ] $100 Contributor [ ] $50 Basic/Individual

[ ] $25 Gift Membership - Special Offer for Current Members to give

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

Affiliation

I am a member and would like to give a gift membership to my friend (name above):

First Name

Address

Telephone

I am already a member, but would like to make a contribution of $ (please give name above).

Order GVSHP Gifts

[ ] I would like to order a copy of Discovering Greenwich Village (12 page activity book for children ages 7-12) $3.00 plus $0.60 shipping

[ ] I would like to order a copy of The Greenwich Village Waterfront, An Historic Study (46 page booklet with an overview of Greenwich Village waterfront history) $5.00 plus $0.60 shipping

[ ] I would like to order a Greenwich Village T-shirt (white t-shirt with green lettering in medium, large and extra large). GVSHP logo on front; list of famous Village residents on back) $15.00 plus $2.50 shipping

[ ] I would like to order a Save Gansevoort Market T-shirt (white t-shirt with red Save Gansevoort Market logo on front) $15.00 plus $2.50 shipping

[ ] I would like to order a set of Greenwich Village notecards (right cards and envelopes featuring images from GVSHP’s photograph archive) $8.00 plus $1.00 shipping

[ ] I would like to order a Greenwich Village Waterfront Poster (a full color 16”x24” poster featuring photographs of architectural details from waterfront buildings) $5.00 plus $2.00 shipping

[ ] I would like to order a copy of the Save Gansevoort Market self-guided walking tour (free plus $0.60 shipping charge)

Please return this form with your check to:

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation
232 East 11th Street New York, NY 10003 (212) 475-5985 gvsfph@qpop.com

Gansevoort Street cobblestones before inappropriate mod (5) and after (9)
continued from page one
Christine Quinn, met and toured the area with the chairs of the relevant City Council committees which will vote on the plan. We will notify our members about the next stage of this effort, and how you can help.

This long-awaited hearing came with no time to spare. While the proposed district leaves out the westernmost blocks of the neighborhood (which GVSHP urged be included, but which the City took out of our proposed district pending a final resolution on the future use of the High Line, which runs through those blocks), the district the LPC has agreed to hear covers all or part of 13 blocks extending from the east side of Hudson Street to the west side of Washington Street, from Horatio Street to 15th Street. Designations will protect this area from inappropriate development and demolitions, and ensure that future changes are compatible with the special history, scale, and character of the area.

Getting to this point was a Herculean effort, with much assistance along the way. In November our cause was certainly bolstered when the Preservation League of New York State named Gansevoort Market to their annual "Sevens to Save" list, the seven most important endangered historic sites in New York State. Additionally, a steady flow of letters, postcards and e-mails from our membership in support of designations, and big turnouts at key hearings and events, have helped make this effort a success. We can all take great pride in what we have achieved so far, and what we hope will soon be accomplished.

Advancing an Agenda To Stop Inстitutional Overdevelopment

Manhattan’s Community Boards and Council Members, and the Borough President. Additionally, under GVSHP’s coordination, the Citywide Coalition for Community Facility Reform has developed a general call for reform which is being circulated to community board officials to lobby for the implementation of reforms and will continue to meet with and lobby city officials.

Working towards long-range reform of this and other outdated zoning regulations that allow the destruction of the character of our neighborhoods will continue to be a priority for GVSHP in the coming year. If you would like to be more involved in this effort, please contact us at gvs hp.org or at 212/475-9585 x38.

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BENEFIT HOUSE TOUR

On Sunday, May 4th, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation will hold its Annual Benefit and Spring House Tour. This year’s tour, entitled The Way We Live Now, focuses on historic homes that have been thoughtfully adapted for the 21st century. The sites chosen this year all feature a contemporary re-evaluation, and, in many cases, a thorough redecoration, of traditional Village living spaces. Included on the tour is an 1830s Greek revival row house that, while carefully preserving its classic proportions and architectural details, now serves as a gallery for Buddhist and Hindu iconographic painting and sculpture. Also included on the tour is a former commercial building on the edge of the Meatpacking district that has been dramatically converted for residential use, a restored double-width townhouse never before opened to the public, and a 19th century townhouse on Bedford Street with a guest house in the shell of a tiny former gas station. Although original architectural elements remain in almost all of the homes, each owner has taken a unique approach to the structure’s renovation.

The house tour not only provides an opportunity to get a rare glimpse at some of the Village’s most distinctive homes and celebrates the Village’s special architectural and cultural legacy, as our major annual fundraiser, the house tour also provides a means to support the Society’s efforts, and introduce new friends to the Society’s work. See program listings for exact and pricing information.

One of several impressive homes on the Society’s 6th Annual Spring House Tour

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