



## Society Scores Landmark Victory!

### Expansion of Historic District First Since 1969

wrote to the LPC in 1963 urging that landmark protections being considered for the Village extend all the way to the waterfront. Unfortunately, when the Greenwich Village Historic District was designated in 1969, it excluded many wonderful historic buildings between Greenwich Street and the river.

When the Society was founded in 1980, preserving the Far West Village was one of our top priorities, and much of the work by GVSHP and many other groups to push for preservation of the area was based upon the groundbreaking 1988 survey, *The Architecture of the Greenwich Village Waterfront*, by the Society's first executive director, Regina Kellerman. After the Society successfully led the charge for creation of a Gansevoort Market Historic District in 2003, we immediately turned our sights to the Far West Village. With protests, rallies, and letter-writing campaigns in which thousands participated, the Society and several other community groups pushed for enactment of a landmarking plan the Society submitted to the City in the fall of 2004.

By last summer, the City publicly promised to landmark about two-thirds of the area we proposed, as well as to downzone the area — that is, reduce the size and height of allowable new development — based upon a plan the

Society had submitted. Last fall, the downzoning was passed, and three buildings originally excluded from the City's landmarking plan which the Society fought to have restored were put back in the plan. The May 2nd vote, extending the Greenwich Village Historic District three blocks west and creating a new Weehawken Street Historic District, delivers upon the lion's share of the City's landmarking promise. Council Speaker Quinn, Borough President Stringer, State Senator Duane, and Assemblymember Glick had all joined us in pushing for designation. However, the promised designation of six other individual buildings in the Far West Village, plus the entire Westbeth complex, and Charles Lane has not yet been acted upon by the City.

*As we went to press, we were saddened to learn of the death of Jane Jacobs, the pioneering preservationist and an early member of the Society's Board of Advisors. This newsletter is dedicated to her memory.*

On May 2nd, preservation history was made when the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted unanimously to extend historic district protections to five blocks in the Far West Village. This action guarantees the preservation of the historic buildings in this unprotected area, and follows a year-and-a-half campaign to protect the Far West Village led by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

Of course, Villagers have been fighting to preserve this neighborhood since the 1960s. Last year, the Society submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission a copy of a letter Jane Jacobs

**Just a few of the dozens of historic buildings now landmarked in the Far West Village**



While far from including everything we asked for, the landmarking and rezoning of the Far West Village made history as the first downzoning in Manhattan in recent memory and the first extension of the Greenwich Village Historic District since its designation in 1969. Most important, the two will also go a long way towards preserving the historic character of an area where destruction of historic buildings and their replacement with new out-of-scale development has become commonplace (see [www.gvshp.org/FWV.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/FWV.htm)).

Please join us in thanking the LPC for its important vote to preserve our neighborhood, but also in urging the Commission to make good on the rest of its public promise to extend landmark protections to this neighborhood. Go to [www.gvshp.org/FWVletters.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/FWVletters.htm) for sample letters and contact information.

## Jefferson Market Library

For over two years, the deteriorating façade of Jefferson Market Library, one of the Village's and New York's greatest landmarks, has been covered in scaffolding. More than \$2 million had been allocated several years ago for renovation of the library by former City Council Member Tom Duane and current City Council Speaker Christine Quinn. The library, however, recently announced renovation plans that did not include any work on the facade of the building, and claimed that more money would be needed to completely restore the facade.

The Society and many others expressed serious concerns to the library that without swift action, further deterioration to the exterior of the building would occur. We've also supplied the library with a list of potential new funders for exterior repairs and offered to help in any way to advocate for funding if necessary. Speaker Quinn, after soliciting input from the public about the renovation, has announced that City Council funding can and will be switched to repair the historic façade, and is working with library officials to come up with a renovation plan and look at funding issues. We will continue to monitor the situation and work to ensure that this precious neighborhood landmark is restored.

## East Village Rezoning Update

The Society continues to advocate for a rezoning to protect the character of the East Village and prevent overdevelopment of the area. We are working closely with Community Board No. 3, Councilmember Rosie Mendez, and groups like the East Village Community Coalition and the St. Ann's Committee on this effort. This spring, the Society's executive director, Andrew Berman, was appointed to the CB 3 task force that will negotiate a rezoning plan for the area with the City. The task force has put together a plan that creates height caps for new development similar to the height of existing buildings, prevents the unlimited transfer of air rights now allowed in the area, and eliminates the community-facilities bulk bonus, which encourages the development of dorms and other university facilities in the neighborhood. The plan also provides incentives for including affordable housing in new developments or for retaining existing affordable housing in the neighborhood. The Society has been working to move the plan along as quickly as possible, and to have it take in the Third and Fourth Avenue corridors and the blocks in between — an area the City has expressed reservations about including.

## Update on Far West Village Carve-Outs

Working with elected officials and other community groups, the Society was able to secure a substantial reduction in the size and height of the proposed Related Co. development of the Superior Inks site at West and Bethune Streets, as well as the elimination of the original scheme's curving glass façade. We continue to push, however, for further improvements from the developer, and for landmarking the site, which would preserve the existing building.

We're also working to reduce the size of the very large development planned for 303 W. 10th Street, a property also carved out of the downzoning and landmarking plan for the area. As we went to press, the final plans for development on both of these sites have not yet been made public, but we plan to monitor them closely.

## Highlighting South Village History

As part of the Society's ongoing effort to preserve the special but unprotected part of Greenwich Village south of Washington Square Park, we will be conducting programs about the South Village throughout the year and beyond, paying particular attention to the Italian-American history of the neighborhood. Lectures have already included "Italian Women of the South Village: 1900-1950" by the historian Miriam Cohen. A walking tour of the Italian churches of the South Village, Our Lady of Pompeii and St. Anthony of Padua, will be given in April and May. Check [www.gvshp.org/events.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/events.htm) for more information and for the latest schedules.

**A South Village walking tour gathers in front of St. Anthony of Padua Church**



## Trying to Tame NYU's Growth

### Alliance Forms Around Plan to Rein In Expansion

hundred buildings between Second and Sixth Avenues in the Village. Since the early 1980s, the university has moved into all or part of 25 buildings in the area, including a dozen high-rises it built. With the university's recent announcement of plans to build a 26-story dorm on East 12th Street, the tallest building in the East Village, it's clear that under current conditions NYU will simply continue to take over and build up more and more of our neighborhood.

That's why the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation is leading a campaign to stop the perpetual expansion of NYU in our neighborhoods. We are calling for the City and the university to work together to establish one or more satellite campuses, so that if NYU continues to grow, our neighborhoods do not have to absorb all its growth. We believe that this is not only fair but also advantageous to the City, to our neighborhoods, and even to NYU, which had a second campus in the Bronx until 1973. We also believe that it may be our only hope for preventing the increasing consumption of our neighborhoods by NYU.

In a short period of time, the proposal has gained an extraordinary amount of support from neighborhood groups throughout the Village, Noho, and the East Village, and won unanimous endorsements from Community Boards No. 2 and 3. Borough President Scott Stringer and Councilmember Rosie Mendez have spoken in favor of pursuing the option, and *The Villager*, the local weekly newspaper, has come out strongly in favor of it. An outpouring of letters from the public to city officials and strong public turnout at hearings this winter have also propelled the plan forward. For more details, see [www.gvshp.org/NYUexpansion.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/NYUexpansion.htm).

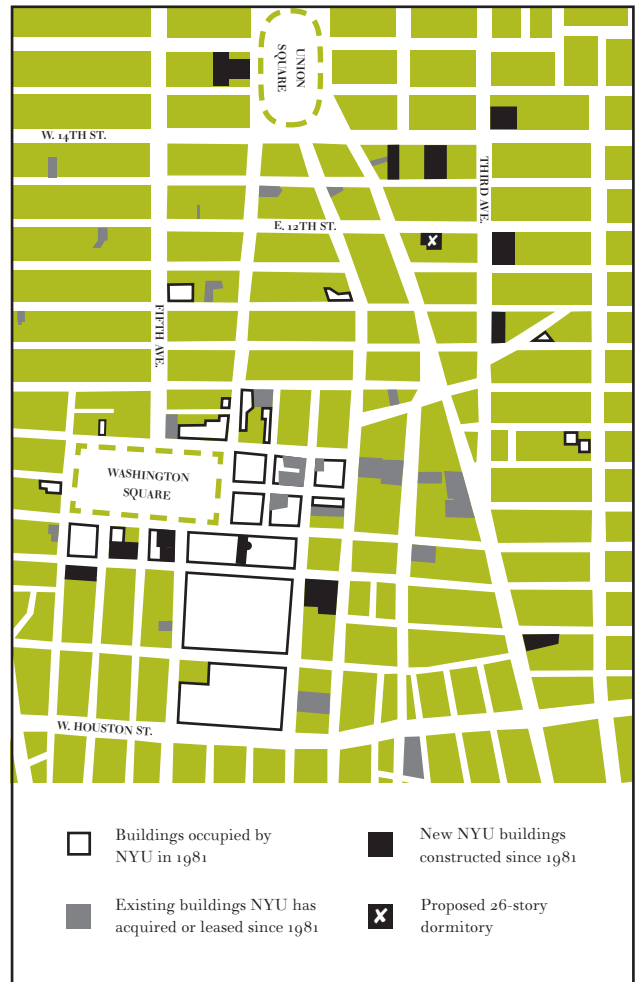
But we still have long way to go to make this plan a reality. Please write to Mayor Bloomberg and City Planning Commission Chair Amanda Burden urging their support. You can get sample letters at [www.gvshp.org/NYUBurden.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/NYUBurden.htm).

In the meantime, the Society continues to monitor NYU's current development plans. Working closely with neighbors, Community Board No. 3, and Councilmember Mendez, we've met regularly with NYU to urge them to reduce the size and height of their planned 26-story dorm and to redesign it to conform to the

The ongoing expansion of NYU in Greenwich Village, Noho, and the East Village is one of the most critical preservation issues our neighborhoods face. The largest private university in the United States, NYU currently occupies about a

neighborhood. We've also been pressing them to begin discussing their long-term building plans with the public — something NYU President John Sexton first pledged to do in a town meeting four years ago.

Recently, the Society discovered that NYU was secretly negotiating with the owner of a lot at the northwest corner of Third Avenue and 10th Street to develop the site. Confronting the university, we urged them to drop negotiations, particularly in light of the lack of progress on their promise to include the community in long-range planning discussions. After NYU refused to agree, the Society exposed the negotiations, which were then dropped.



## Glass Tower Plan Draws Fire

### Controversial Design Proposed for Historic District

general. But just such a proposal has been put forward for a parking lot at Greenwich Avenue, 13th Street, and Eighth Avenue.

Hines Interests has proposed building an 11-story, undulating glass tower designed by William Pedersen of Kohn Pedersen Fox, with the full height tower at Eighth Avenue and a lower six-story wing along Greenwich Avenue extending toward 13th Street. The building would overlook Jackson Square and, because of the neighborhood's unusual street pattern, would be highly visible for several blocks in nearly every direction. As proposed, each floor of the building would undulate in a separate and slightly different pattern, making for a uniquely configured building.

Meeting with the developer and the architect, the Society was impressed by their thoughtfulness and their willingness to solicit feedback and reactions before going to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Ultimately, however, we found the design inappropriate for the Greenwich Village Historic District. Almost entirely made of glass, with horizontal bands throughout, the proposed building does not, in our opinion, relate sufficiently to the varied but more solid and intricately patterned architecture of the district. Nor does the design seem to justify the 15 additional feet in height the developer is requesting beyond what the underlying zoning allows.

At the hearing on March 7th, the Society presented the Landmarks Preservation Commission with excerpts from the original Greenwich Village Historic District designation report, where in 1969 the commissioners stated that they expected new development in the district to “take into account [its] surroundings [and] relate well to its neighbors in terms of the materials that are used.” They explained, “From the totality of Greenwich Village emanates an appearance and even more a spirit and character of

Rarely does a proposal for a new building come along in the Greenwich Village Historic District, and even more rarely does it have profound implications for the entire district and for landmark protections in

Old New York. It is this collective emanation which distinguishes an historic district and gives it a unique aesthetic and historic value. It contains the greatest concentration of early New York residential architecture to be found anywhere in the five boroughs of New York City. There is visual harmony here, achieved through the . . . use of materials such as brick and brownstone.”

Scores of neighbors and representatives of other preservation organizations joined the Society in urging that the proposed design be changed or rejected, as did representatives of Borough President Stringer, Council Speaker Quinn, State Senator Duane, and Assemblymember Glick. Others, however, testified in favor of the design, calling it great architecture. Whether or not you agree with this assertion, we believe that it misses a more important point: that



Proposed building  
for 122 Greenwich  
Ave. parking lot site

designs in historic districts must be, above all else, appropriate to the specific character of the district, which landmark designation is supposed to reinforce and preserve. Without this, the Landmarks Preservation Commission's role in overseeing historic districts becomes merely that of a general architectural review board or, worse, a rubber stamp for new designs — neither of which, we believe, is consistent with the purpose of the landmarks law.

As we go to press, the LPC appears poised to approve the design for 122 Greenwich Avenue essentially as proposed. For the latest information or to help, go to [www.gvshp.org/122GrAv.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/122GrAv.htm).

## From the Director

If I ever had any doubts about how much difference

the work we do here at the Society really makes a difference, events of the last several weeks have surely made them disappear. The May 2nd expansion of the Greenwich Village Historic District and creation of a Weehawken Street Historic District delivers on at least part of a long-held dream of this community — to preserve the wonderful character, scale, and historic buildings of the Far West Village. At least one site within the new historic district was facing demolition plans when landmarking took effect, and several others were rumored to be; similarly, last year's downzoning of the Far West Village stopped two out-of-scale development projects dead in their tracks, and likely dramatically altered plans for a third. Even where we were not able to secure the landmark or downzoning protections we sought, such as at the Superior Inks site, we were able to extract substantial changes that will make a lasting difference.

In some ways, even the recent losses remind us that our work makes a difference. The loss of the Tunnel Garage shows just how important it is that we are there to hold developers' and the City's feet to the fire. And even the Landmarks Commission's newfound willingness to consider dramatically modern architecture with little or no connection to the historic districts in which they are located

speaks to the need for us to keep doing our work, and fighting for what we believe in.

But fortunately our work is not all about calling the City or developers to task. We have succeeded in getting the City to take another look at preserving individual early 19th century Federal houses, with five new landmark designations in the last two years. We succeeded in getting the City to designate most of the Meatpacking District a historic district, saving that neighborhood from almost definite wholesale destruction. We have completely reframed the conversation about NYU and institutional overdevelopment in our neighborhoods, and put forward a solution from which we think everyone can benefit. And we are updating and refitting our children's education program, the oldest and largest education program for youngsters about historic preservation in the City, which now serves over 1,500 students yearly.

With changes most of us never dreamed possible sweeping over our neighborhood, so too are some great signs of progress. Does our work make a difference? Whenever I wonder about that, I imagine what our neighborhood might look like without the work we do — and I'm always glad that I only have to imagine it.



## The Society

Our offices can be reached by phone at (212) 475-9585, by e-mail at [gvshp@gvshp.org](mailto:gvshp@gvshp.org), and by postal mail at 232 East 11th Street, New York, New York 10003. We can be found on the web at [www.gvshp.org](http://www.gvshp.org).

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## Tunnel Garage: 1922-2006

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### The Loss of a Neighborhood Icon

Whether you dimly remembered it or had only heard about it, the icon didn't disappoint: a ten-foot-tall multi-colored terra cotta image of a man driving an early automobile through the nearby Holland Tunnel. But the sight was short-lived. Just a week later, over the Society's protests, demolition on the Tunnel Garage began.

The unwillingness of the owner to preserve the building in whole or part was as stunning as the unwillingness of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to landmark it. The Society's push for landmarking received support not just from local and citywide preservation advocates but from Art Deco societies as far away as Florida and California, and even from the Henry Ford Museum, in Dearborn, Michigan. At the Society's request, the State of New York determined the building eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places based upon its architectural and historic significance — a listing that would have qualified the building for grants and tax breaks for restoration work. Neighbors formed an extremely dedicated association, Friends of the Tunnel Garage, to fight for the building, and joined the Society for several demonstrations. Council Speaker Quinn, State Senators Duane and Connor, and Assemblymember Glick all wrote letters in support of landmarking. But the LPC refused to act, stating that “the building does not meet our standards for a landmark.”

The building, many felt, was the very picture of a landmark. Built in 1922, the garage was conceived as a tribute to the not-yet-finished Holland Tunnel, which would be the longest vehicular tunnel in the

**Executive Director  
Andrew Berman leading  
demonstration to save the  
Tunnel Garage**

It was a stunning sight. On March 21, 2006, after nearly a quarter century hidden under a “24 Hour Parking” sign, the giant medallion of an early-model car on the venerable Tunnel Garage, at Broome and Thompson Streets, was again revealed.



world and the first direct connection for cars, buses, and trucks from New York City across the Hudson River. The building's design was also one of the first in New York (or, for that matter, the United States) that could arguably be called Art Deco, a full three years before the Paris exposition introduced the revolutionary style to the world. With a boldly rounded corner, distinctive typography, and custom-made capitals, this was the little garage that could, heralding a new era of design and technology.

The loss of this building is especially regrettable because it could have been prevented so easily by the owner or the City. The Society is now working with the owner, the neighbors, and elected officials to try to save the medallion and give it a new home where the public can continue to appreciate it. The Tunnel Garage lay at the southern edge of the area covered by the Society's Historic South Village Study. The Society is documenting the history of the neighborhood with the goal of securing landmark and zoning protections that would help preserve the area's unique architecture and character. For more information, see [www.gvshp.org/svtg.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/svtg.htm) and [www.gvshp.org/southvillage.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/southvillage.htm).

## Meatpacking Grind Continues

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### Society Responds to Latest Plans for Neighborhood

After the Society's Save Gansevoort Market project secured landmark status for much of the Meatpacking District in 2003, our attention turned to preserving the undesignated buildings at the district's edges and trying to ensure that the neighborhood retained a healthy balance of uses. In 2004, we embarked upon an effort to study the feasibility of relocating the Flower Market, which was being forced out of its midtown home, into the western, undesignated blocks of the Meatpacking District. Such a move could have saved many of the endangered buildings there and also ensured that the area retained a dynamic mix of market uses. The study gained considerable support from community leaders, local elected officials, the J. M. Kaplan Fund, and hundreds of residents and businesspeople who supported our “Meat Market Blooms” initiative. Over several months, a consulting team we hired worked with the City, the State, and Flower Market businesses to evaluate what would be necessary to allow these businesses to make a permanent home in the Meatpacking District.

Unfortunately, because of the particular space needs of the Flower Market businesses and the substantial public investment

that would have been required of the City and the State, the plan was unable to move ahead. Instead, the City decided to work with the Dia Center for the Arts to try to relocate it to the same area, the north side of Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets. The Society then immediately became involved in discussions with the City and Dia about the proposal, eager to make sure that the plan would be appropriate for the district.

Feedback from the community indicated that many felt that an arts center at this location could make a substantial contribution to the neighborhood. The Society agreed, but also wants to ensure that: the developers make every effort to preserve historic buildings on the site; new buildings are compatible in scale and design with other buildings in the area and with the adjacent High Line park about to be built; and the plan includes accommodations that would allow the area's existing meatpacking businesses to remain there permanently.

Upon meeting with City and Dia officials, the Society was assured by both that they shared these goals. Due to restrictive declarations that currently govern these properties, any plan to allow Dia to move into this block would require a public approval process, ensuring that both the Society and the public will have the opportunity to monitor and weigh in on any plans before they're approved.

The Society is also monitoring plans for a large development nearby at the neighborhood's undesignated edges. At 848 Washington Street (at 13th Street), the Society met with André Balazs about his plans to erect a 20-story hotel on the site, which was excised by the City from the landmark district the Society had proposed for the area. The Society had succeeded in stopping two prior plans here by a different developer for a 500-foot-tall hotel and residential complex because they violated the neighborhood's zoning. The Society had also asked the City to restrict hotel uses in the area as well, but the City refused. The Society expressed significant concerns to Mr. Balazs about the height of his planned 200-plus-foot-tall building, and asked for changes to the design, which draws upon Miami Beach hotel designs of the 1950s that we did not feel were appropriate for this neighborhood. As we go to press, the fate of the project remains unclear.

Finally, the Society continues to be involved in the public process for reviewing the design of the Meatpacking District section of the new High Line park. This wonderful public space, with multiple entrances, will begin at Gansevoort Street, and is expected to open in 2008.

**Children's Ed. instructor Jane Cowan points out details on Washington Square Arch**

## Children's Ed Grows Up

### Society's Program Expands, Turns 15

reached a small number of third to sixth graders, mostly in Greenwich Village. Now, fifteen years later, we reach approximately 1,500 children a year, starting in first grade in schools throughout Manhattan.

Greenwich Village: History and Historic Preservation uses New York City as a living classroom for students to explore and learn more about how history can be found, and preserved, in their physical surroundings. The program has three sessions — a presentation in class, a walking tour of Washington Square Park and nearby blocks, and an art project — that highlight the uniqueness of Greenwich Village's historic architecture and the importance of preserving and learning from the past. In 1995 the Society added a workbook to the program, *Discovering Greenwich Village*, which offers activities and follow-up exercises. Since 2004 the program has been offered in the summer to students in the



GO Project, a service of Grace Church School for students from the Lower East Side who are in danger of being left back or removed from traditional schools.

We are now seeking funds to let us expand and redesign the program and the workbook to adapt to changes in education, architecture, and technology. Among the additions contemplated are neighborhoods

the Society has worked to preserve, including the Far West Village and South Village. The Society has always considered education a vital part of its mission of advocacy. For instance, the walking tour has stopped for many years at three of the oldest houses in the Village — 127, 129, and 131 MacDougal Street. Built in 1827, these buildings were the perennial object of the Society's preservation efforts. In 2004, they were finally designated landmarks.

If you're interested in finding out more about the program or having a school class enroll in it, call (212) 475-9585, ext. 39, or go to [www.gvshp.org/education.htm](http://www.gvshp.org/education.htm).

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