

Tobi Bergman, *Chair*
Terri Cude, *First Vice Chair*
Susan Kent, *Second Vice Chair*
Bob Gormley, *District
Manager*



Antony Wong, *Treasurer*
Keen Berger, *Secretary*
Susan Wittenberg, *Assistant Secretary*

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE

NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

www.cb2manhattan.org

P: 212-979-2272 F: 212-254-5102 E: info@cb2manhattan.org

Greenwich Village ✦ Little Italy ✦ SoHo ✦ NoHo ✦ Hudson Square ✦ Chinatown ✦ Gansevoort Market

October 23, 2015

Meenakshi Srinivasan, *Chair*
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre St., 9th Floor North
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

At its Full Board meeting on October 24, 2015, Community Board #2, Manhattan (CB2, Man.) adopted the following resolution:

GANSEVOORT ROW LANDMARKS MEETING

1. *46-50 Gansevoort St.

- **46-48 Gansevoort St.:** preservation and rehabilitation of the existing building including the installation of new steel storefront infill and windows, replacement of the two historic metal marquees, replacement of the existing rooftop skylight, installation of signage, and excavation under the existing building footprint.
- **50 Gansevoort St.:** demolition of the existing building ('No Style Covering' in LPC HD Report) and construction of a new three-story plus cellar building clad in buff brick with steel-and-glass storefront infill and steel widows on the upper floors.

2. *52-58 Gansevoort St.- preservation and rehabilitation of the existing building including installation of new ground-floor infill, installation of signage and lighting, installation of new wood windows on the second floor, horizontal extension of the second floor at the rear, and excavation under the existing building footprint.

3. *60-74 Gansevoort St

- **60-68 Gansevoort St.:** preservation of the existing building and marquee, including the installation of new metal-and-glass storefront infill, signage, lighting, reconstruction of the demolished upper three stories of the historic building construction of a one-story set back addition with rooftop mechanicals, and excavation under the existing building footprint.

- **70-74 Gansevoort St.:** demolition of the existing one-story building ('No Style' in LPC HD Report) and construction of a new six-story plus cellar building clad in mottled gray brick with a two-story penthouse clad in wood and glass, installation of metal-and-glass storefront infill, and steel-wood-and-glass marquees.

The proposed project alters the very essence and distinct characteristics that deemed this district historic and worth preserving by designation. It alters the mass, scale and architectural details that are particular to this street and that represent the meatpacking district so well that it graces the cover of the LPC's report (Historic Designation Report for the Gansevoort Market Historic District).

The demolition of some buildings and the gigantic enlargement of the other buildings is overwhelming - not deferential and subservient in its impact on the historic architecture of the row, the streetscape, and the views from elsewhere in the district and beyond.

The proposed design, in its overall appearance and detail, is highly commercial with an artificial affectation that is neither authentic nor respectful of the character and essence of this block and the district.

Whereas,

- A. The row is unique as the only intact block and an illustrative ensemble of vernacular architecture specific to the Gansevoort Market District; giving a distinctive illustration of the changes throughout the history of the district prior to designation and has existed, essentially, in its present form for 75 years; and
- B. The grittiness of an urban, working district of meat packing and other market activities was an important reason, along with the distinctive architecture, for designation and this is perfectly encapsulated in this row; and
- C. Each of the different styles and sizes of buildings in the row contributes in an important way to the whole, especially with the unifying, low, horizontal facade lines and sheds; marked at the eastern end with the later, higher buildings and standing in important contrast to the large warehouse building, originally served by the high-line railroad, to the west across Washington Street; and
- D. As the last remaining intact market row, it provides a distinctive vista inside and outside the district and serves as a historic passage through the district leading to the High Line and Whitney Museum, giving a "social and architectural history lesson" to those who pass by; and
- E. Buildings 46 - 48 are to be renovated with bi-fold steel and glass infill that are out of context and the two historic metal marquees are replaced by new inappropriately ornamental shed canopies which lack the sense of light and shadow and the utilitarian purpose which the original canopies served and instead speak to a fussy decorativeness, calling undue attention to themselves; and
- F. Building 50 retains its reasonably intact facade behind the cladding and is suitable for restoration rather than demolition. The proposed replacement destroys the low rise, horizontal character of the row anchored by 52 - 58 and also has the same ornamental canopies proposed in 46-48; and
- G. Building 52 - 58 are to be restored with minimal changes in openings, retaining the original historic canopy and with new bi-fold steel and glass infill that are out of context with the building and the district; and

H. Building 60-68 uses the existing, restored building, with its parapet shorn off, as the lower floors of an inordinately high building designed in a generic style with no discernible reference to the district and of a scale that obliterates the charm of the existing building and the predominant horizontal character of the original row; and

I. Building 70-74, while characterized as “no style” in the designation report, was designed by a well-known architectural firm and exemplifies a purpose-built, inter-war market style building which enriches the overall significance of the row and maintains the low rise, horizontal character of the row. The proposed replacement is an inordinately high building with a large, assertive, penthouse with an undulating facade that is completely without reference. This building intrudes unacceptably on the streetscape of the eastern side of Washington Street in the adjacent Greenwich Village Historic District; and

J. Taken together, Buildings 60-68 and 70-74 overwhelm the row; completely erasing any feeling of the important low rise, horizontal unity and the architectural treatment of the two lower stories of both buildings and the undefined lower stories serves further to present the buildings as generic, medium rise structures, unrelated in any way to the district; and

K. The proposal raises the profile of the new buildings to elevations (98 feet, 120 feet, 52’-5” feet including mechanicals) which obliterate any reference to the designated row as it now exists, almost perfectly preserved for 75 years; and

L. Any modifications and additions must be secondary, unobtrusive, and harmonious, of minimal height and set back a considerable distance from the facades to preserve the horizontal lines of the row and the scale, rhythm and streetscape of the row and its special place as the oculus of the district; and

M. There is nearly universal opposition from the community with statements against the application from Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and from an ad hoc committee - “Save Gansevoort”, individual members of the community who attended the meeting, and written statements from members of the community and docents for the High Line - together registering approximately 400 oppositions to the application.

N. The Committee received letters of support through the applicant from 15 businesses, and two residents of the neighborhood; now

Therefore be it resolved: that CB2, Man. recommends denial of the demolition of #50 and #70-74; and

Be it further resolved, that CB2, Man. recommends denial of any modifications or additions to any of the buildings that are not secondary, unobtrusive and harmonious and do not preserve the horizontal lines, scale, rhythm, streetscape, and regard for the history of the row; and

Be it finally resolved, that because any appropriate development for this block will need drastic reduction in scale – especially minimal height and considerable setback of additions atop existing buildings - and a design that is sensitive to the buildings and to the district. Essentially a new proposal will be required; therefore, proposed modifications to the application should be presented to the CB2, Man. Landmarks Committee prior to a hearing before the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Vote: Unanimous, with 36 Board members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tobi Bergman', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tobi Bergman, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan

TB/fa

c: Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NY State Senator
Hon. Daniel L. Squadron, NY State Senator
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, Assembly Member
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Corey Johnson, Council Member
Hon. Margaret Chin, Council Member
Hon. Rosie Mendez, Council Member
Lauren George, Director of Government & Community Relations,
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Emily Rich, Public Information Officer, Landmarks Preservation Commission