

Greenwich Village Block Associations

20 Bank Street, New York, NY 10014

Bedford, Barrow &
Commerce
Bedford Downing
Bleecker Area Merchants &
Residents
Carmine Street
Central Village
(Cornelia, Barrow, Jones)
Charlton Street
Christopher Street Block &
Merchants
Christopher Street East
East 10th Street
East 11th Street
East 12th/13th Street
Far West Bank Street
Far West 10th Street
Grove Street
Horatio Street
Jane Street
MacDougal Alley Assoc.
MacDougal Street North
Mercer Street
Minetta
Morton Street
Mulry Angle/W. 11th Street
Perry Street
St. Luke's Place
Upper West 13th Street
Washington Place
Washington Sq./
Lower 5th Ave
Waverly
Waverly-Bank 11 Neighbors
West Houston Street
West 8th Street
West 9th Street
West 10th Street
West 13th Street - 100 Block

August 19, 2009
Hon. Scott Stringer
Manhattan Borough President
One Centre Street — 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007
Dear BP Stringer:

As you are aware, the Greenwich Village Block Associations (GVBA) has been an active participant in the NYU Task Force. GVBA ratification of the Planning Principles, however, involved an arduous discussion within our membership when we reconsidered our initial decision not to endorse the Planning Principles following the Provincetown Playhouse project presentation in Spring 2008. GVBA believed that the first NYU project, the Provincetown building block redevelopment scheme, did not honor a Planning Principle dictum: to opt for “reuse before new development.” GVBA viewed this project as directly contradicting the reuse objective. Hence our decision not to endorse the Planning Principles because we thought that this may be viewed as supporting a project not in keeping with them. (GVBA letter, April 28, 2008).

By September 2008, a severance of the time linkage between the adoption of the Planning Principles and approval of the Provincetown project had occurred. GVBA then voted for ratification. At the same time, GVBA noted that the ratification should not be construed as supporting Provincetown. GVBA was wary that the first NYU project under the adopted Planning Principles might be a “harbinger of future proposals flowing out of the NYU Plan 2031 with its massive 6 million sq. ft.” GVBA was concerned that the NYU Task Force not serve as a “public relations ploy with no genuine expectation of positive community benefits.” (GVBA letter, September 29, 2008).

With the recent unveiling of NYU's proposed Interfaith Center project as the second example violating the “reuse” principle, GVBA fears that our original qualms were well reasoned. NYU had failed to evaluate and present reasons for not decentralizing its location. NYU has also neglected to consult with the community on the design for this prominent site on Washington Square Park, its visual impact as seen through the Washington Square Arch and its proximity to the landmark Judson Memorial Church. (Indeed, the recent presentation of the Tisch Theatre on Lafayette St to the NOHO Manhattan neighborhood group further contravenes an essential reason for the creation of the Task Force.) The Catholic Center project had never been fully presented to the Task Force beyond a perfunctory NYU announcement at the last

meeting that NYU was unprepared to present details except that the building would be organized as a condominium with the Catholic Archdiocese. (NYU said that design details of the Theatre were still being worked out.) When NYU singularly controls the input (what they present and when) and the output (what they present and to whom), the result is no process at all.

GVBA is troubled by the omission of a vetting process through the Task Force of the Catholic Center and the abrupt presentation before Community Board 2's Institutions Committee in mid-June. Initially, the process or lack thereof endowed CB2 through its Institutions Committee as the arbiter of whether or not the Interfaith Center proposal conformed to the Planning Principles. GVBA does not believe that CB2 was ever intended to substitute or act for the Task Force in the process. In this instance, CB2 had no input from the Task Force and limited input from the community at a sparsely attended (i.e. non-NYU, community board and NYU design consultant staff) Institutions Committee meeting. We believe that the resulting CB2 resolution wrongly conferred legitimacy on NYU's conduct.

GVBA believes that the process, or lack thereof, is not adhering to the Planning Principles that were so arduously articulated by the Task Force. The two projects announced by NYU to date — Provincetown and Interfaith— have followed a path that allows NYU to effectuate its 2031 Plan magnitude in an *ad hoc* manner, one building at a time, under the guise that it has the imprimatur of community support. GVBA cannot comment on the Tisch Theatre as it has yet to be presented outside the NOHO community. It seems that our worst fears are being realized. Unless we see a positive change in the process, GVBA may be obliged to withdraw from the Task Force and to a process that we believe is currently being subverted.

Sincerely yours,

Marilyn Dorato
Executive Director

Cc:

Hon. Christine Quinn, Council Speaker
Hon. Alan Jay Gerson, Council Member
Hon. Rosie Mendez, Council Member
Hon. Jo Hamilton, Chair CB2
Hon. David Gruber, Chair, CB2 Institutions Committee
GVBA Members
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