

SPERONE WESTWATER
257 Bowery New York 10002
T + 1 212 999 7337 F + 1 212 999 7338

20 March 2013

Ms. Amanda M. Burden
Chair, City Planning Commission
Director, Department of City Planning
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Amanda,

As you may know, I am challenging in New York State Supreme Court the Board of Standards and Appeals' approval of an inappropriate, mammoth-sized hotel/condominium that would irrevocably destroy the character and historic context of the Bowery community, including the adjacent Sarah Roosevelt Park and the Bowery Historic District. On a more personal level, it would also compromise the design intent of my recently completed, award winning Foster+Partners building located at 257 Bowery, almost completely blocking all natural light from its East façade. The BSA approval allows the construction of a bulky 200,000 square foot, 25 story tall hotel/condominium on open space that was reserved for sitting, walking and a playground in the original 1982 site plan. The resulting bulk would darken all surrounding areas at one point or other during the year and will smother the life out of a vibrant multi-ethnic community.

Given my recent first-hand experience in the trenches battling contextually inappropriate real estate development, I feel compelled to write you regarding an even larger concern: the lack of effective oversight in place to protect the east side of the Bowery from greedy developers and inappropriately scaled development which is testimony itself to the inequity served less affluent neighborhoods in our city. Please consider the need for low-rise contextual zoning on this inadequately protected historic thoroughfare. If left unchecked by New York City Planning, new construction on the Bowery will systematically obliterate the unique architectural characteristics of this fragile neighborhood within the near future. Although the positions on the west side of the Bowery are reasonably protected by the Little Italy Special District and the NoHo Historic District designations, the Bowery's east side is afforded no similar status. This is tragic when one considers that we are speaking of the other side of the oldest street in New York City.

Given the fact that the Bowery was recently designated to the National Register of Historic Places, the Bowery's historical significance underscores the urgent need for protective measures to be put into place. The incentive to demolish small historical structures - to gang up adjacent lots and build gigantic buildings which destroy historical context, such as the condominium tower which hovers over the landmarked Germania Fire Insurance Building or the 22 story Cooper Square Hotel flanked by 3 and 4-story buildings (including a now demolished early 1800's Federal period building) must be contained. **It is for this reason that I strongly support the East Bowery Preservation Plan, which simply asks the city to extend to the historic Bowery's east side the same more reasonable height caps and protections that currently help preserve and protect the street's west side.**

Certainly, I advocate development. It is the bloodline of our city. However, without responsible development, our city's irreplaceable architectural and historical heritage will be relegated to photographs rather than a living record to be experienced by future generations.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,


Angela Westwater
SPERONE WESTWATER