

August 12, 2009

Dear Ms. Burden,

The members of the Liz Christy/Bowery-Houston Community Garden support the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors in their effort to limit building height along the east side of the Bowery. We think that even eight stories is too high. I offer here a case in point.

In their approach to the community in 2004 developer AvalonBay agreed to abide by the Cooper Square commitment to build low on the south side of Houston so that sun to Liz Christy would not be blocked. We believed them, and then found our light from mid-October until mid-February completely shut off by their top story.

In the past, the garden was a magnet for neighborhood residents in the winter. On the weekends we provided a much-needed dose of sunlight during that grim season when most people return from work after dark. Over the years we planted a great many evergreen shrubs and plants to enhance this aspect of garden traffic. On a sunny winter weekend we often had more than a hundred visitors a day. Now that we are in perpetual shade, one or two visitors venture into the dark with trepidation.

The pine tree at our Bowery-Houston corner offers the most visible sign of the need for light if anything is to grow. While it is slowly failing from old age now, the pine has flung out a new top that bends to the west, curving around the AvalonBay building shadow to reach the sunlight on the Bowery. It grew this top just after the building was finished.

Open sky has always been an attractive aspect of life all over the Lower East Side. Walking to the garden, I enjoy the brilliant sun along the Bowery. It would be unfortunate if this were lost by overbuilding at the very moment that GreenNYC is promoting tree planting and other efforts to retain a human scale and livable environment in the city. Zoning to require low building height would be a valuable reinforcement of GreenNYC goals. It is essential to the survival of the Liz Christy Garden. We cannot keep the garden alive if our sunlight is blocked by tall buildings on the west side of the Bowery.

Thank you,



Penny Jones

Chair, Liz Christy/Bowery-Houston Community Garden