



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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May 17, 2010

Hon. Amanda Burden, Chair  
City Planning Commission  
20 Reade Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Burden,

The Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York's historic neighborhoods. HDC is strongly in support of the community-generated "East Bowery Preservation Plan" as proposed by the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors.

As you know, the Bowery is one of New York's most storied blocks; playing an important role in both the physical and cultural development of our city. It was the childhood home of theater in New York and has transformed from an upper-crust address to a bawdy district and back again several times over the past two hundred years. Each time the Bowery adopted a new guise, new development would arise that met the district's new needs. When the needs and character changed again, many of these structures would be recycled and reused, creating a fascinatingly heterogeneous architectural record, unlike almost any other place in the city. On the Bowery, one can easily observe the layering of history through the accretion of different eras of development.

Unfortunately, technological advances and market forces have produced a current era of development which has little interest in re-use, and instead wishes to replace. This is exacerbated by an unfortunate occurrence where, through a series of protective regulations, one side of the Bowery has become fertile ground for developments several times the size of what is allowable on the other side. This forces the east side of the Bowery into becoming a pressure valve for the untrammelled desires of the real estate market which is neither desirable nor sustainable. In the rush to exploit every currently allowable bit of F.A.R., these developments are destroying the very fabric of the Bowery which has made it so desirable and adaptable to change.

The East Bowery Preservation Plan proposes a simple solution to this problem while still allowing new development to take place. If enacted, the pressure on the historic urban fabric of the Bowery will be lessened and more organic, natural development can resume and create more layers of history for future New Yorkers to ponder and enjoy. If not enacted soon, this important piece of New York will be lost forever, buried under dinosaurs of steel and glass, doomed to obsolescence the moment they're topped off.

Please save the Bowery.

Sincerely,



Simeon Bankoff  
Executive Director