

La MaMa etc.

Amanda Burden
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

June 10, 2009

Dear Mrs. Burden,

As a longtime resident of the neighborhood I feel compelled to write and discuss a matter that I feel is of great importance to our beloved Lower East Side of New York. La MaMa has been here since 1961 and sunk our roots deep into the heart of this community - giving and receiving much from the richness of its heritage.

Nothing stays the same in this world and certainly this is so in New York City. However, like the parable of the golden goose, we must not destroy (or "thoughtlessly improve") that which has made us what and who we are - one of the richest tapestries of diversity and artistic exploration on the planet. This is not boastful or wishful thinking but rooted in fact.

I have witnessed much of the last fifty years and know first hand how much we have grown and prospered with hard work, sweat and even tears. The City of New York has been our partner in preserving space here on Fourth Street for the artistic community but we are more than just this block. La MaMa takes our responsibility of anchoring this block and contributing to the prosperity of the theatres and all our neighbors very seriously. The Fourth Street Arts Block (FAB) is an active, vigilant partnership but the Bowery needs your help now.

I urge you to carefully consider the proposals of the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (BAN) regarding the preservation of the east of Bowery. You are the watchdog for the preservation of this community. As an elder steward of the neighborhood I charge you with the future of the Bowery and keeping safe for future generations the essence of its greatness. Let our children and their children know and appreciate what we have created and pass along this heritage with the growth that is essential for life but entwined within the guidelines of the old and valued past that is essential for true progress - a worth goal for life on the Bowery.

I have ultimate faith in your ability to assess the situation and use your powers to preserve the Bowery for all its citizens. Thank you for your kind considerations.

Yours very truly,


Ellen Stewart
Artistic Director

Theater of the World!