

## **Concerned Property Owners in Gowanus**

The Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation  
&

James Ribellino ~ Mike Pontone ~ Pasquale Bruno Jr.

March 4, 2014

Dear Neighbor,

Like you, we are property owners in Gowanus, Brooklyn. A few weeks ago, we received a letter from the New York State Historic Preservation Office of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation indicating that our properties are included in a proposed new "Gowanus Canal Historic District." We are writing to you because your property is also included in the proposed New York State Historic District.

**If the Historic District is approved by the New York State Board of Historic Preservation at its meeting on Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014, our properties—and yours—will automatically be listed on the State Register of Historic Places.** It is highly likely that they subsequently also would be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The letter we received from the NY State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) emphasized the potential benefits of the listing. However, the letter did not explain how this proposed district could impose significant costs, complications and restrictions on development, construction, renovation, maintenance and the operation of our properties.

**Because of these potential negative impacts on our properties, we oppose the inclusion of our properties in a Gowanus Canal Historic District. If you agree, we're asking that you join us in opposing this designation.**

The relevant section of the Historic Preservation Office's own website further demonstrates the potential negative impacts of listing. In a nutshell, **any time a property owner in the Historic District has a project requiring state or federal permits, approvals or funding, the property owner will be required to obtain approval from the State Historic Preservation Office.**

Examples of routine state and federal permits for Gowanus property owners would include (but are not limited to):

- Permits for shoreline stabilization structures;
- FDIC approvals/funding through banks, mortgage, or insurance;
- State air emissions permits for HVAC systems;
- New York State Housing Finance Agency ("HFA") financing or U.S. HUD funding.

Further, listing a "Gowanus Canal Historic District" on the State and Federal Registers may increase the likelihood of a future Historic District designation by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)—which would impose even more onerous restrictions on property owners.

While we support the preservation of truly significant buildings, we feel strongly that the proposed Historic District is comprised mostly of buildings that are not worthy of official listing on government registers of historic places—and that this listing inflicts costly, undue burdens on the affected property owners by subjecting them to state and federal reviews beyond what is required, for example, by the City government if you seek a zoning change or many other approvals or permits.

For these reasons, we have submitted letters to SHPO objecting to the listing of our properties on the State and Federal Registers of Historic Places. **However, in order to prevent the Historic District from moving forward, SHPO must receive objections from a majority of the 422 property owners in the proposed district.**

We hope you will sign the attached objection form, have a notary witness it, and return it using the enclosed pre-paid envelope. **Notarized letters of objection must be received by SHPO no later than Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, so we urge you to return your notarized letter of objection today.** Property owners who object to the listing should submit one notarized form for each separate parcel that they own.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

James Ribellino

Mike Pontone

Pasquale Bruno, Jr.

Bill Appel

Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation