

January 9, 2003

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

**Re: 400 W. 55<sup>th</sup> St. (Gotham Organization) - Negative Impact on Clinton Special Zoning District**

Dear Ms. Burden:

We write to express our concerns about the project planned by the Gotham Organization at 400 W. 55<sup>th</sup> Street at the southwest corner of 55<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. and the negative implications of such a project for the integrity and intent of the Clinton Special Zoning District. This project is totally out of character with Clinton's prevailing low-rise built environment and undermines the intent of the District.

Until now, bulk controls, mid-block height limits and strong housing protections enacted to prevent tower development in the District's Preservation Area have been successful. Gotham, however, has filed plans and secured public financing to construct an 18-story residential tower using development practices not anticipated by the District's rules and regulations – namely, acquiring development rights from adjacent properties and stacking this added bulk on the avenue frontage of its development site. Such action was not anticipated in 1973 when the District was created by the Clinton Community and Department of City Planning.

The Gotham project violates the intent of the Preservation Area which limits height and bulk, in general to 66 feet, and with special permits to 99 feet. It also breaks the street wall, with is continuous on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 39<sup>th</sup> to 57<sup>th</sup> Streets, with a 10-foot setback serving no public purpose. With the currently proposed white brick color, the building will stand out even more.

The Clinton Special District has been a marvelous protector of this neighborhood for the past thirty years. However, the Gotham project now forces the realization that the integrity of Clinton Special District must be strengthened as soon as possible to prevent further projects so wildly out of scale with existing urban context.

**A. Burden**  
**January 9, 2003**  
**Page 2 of 2**

As you know, we already identified other sites within the District's Preservation Area that are vulnerable to similarly inappropriate development. We have communicated our research to your staff. Manhattan Community Board No. 4 requests zoning text amendment to clarify and restrict building heights on avenues within the Preservation Area. Such an amendment is a high priority to the Clinton Community and we request you direct resources to its speedy adoption.

Sincerely,



Simone Sindin  
Chair

cc: Local elected officials  
V. Chakrabarti, DCP  
J. Mulligan, DCP