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## Philip Johnson Joins Other Architects in the Cross Hairs

The prominence of an architect is no guarantee that his projects will go unopposed. For example, residents of the West Village have criticized as too modern a pair of residential towers designed by Richard Meier. And in Lower Manhattan several members of Community Board 1 have complained that Frank Gehry's plan for a downtown branch of the Guggenheim Museum near the Wall Street piers is too flashy.

Now, residents of the western edge of SoHo say that an apartment complex designed by Philip Johnson is simply too big, and plan to oppose it.

The trapezoidal brick structure would rise as high as 26 stories on the southeastern corner of Spring and Washington Streets. Next door is the Ear Inn, a time-tattered tavern housed in a landmark early 19th-century town house.

"I personally like the design of the building," said David Reck, a member of Community Board 2, who is also an architect and president of the Friends of Hudson Square, an advocacy group. "But there's nothing in the immediate area that is anywhere near that tall."

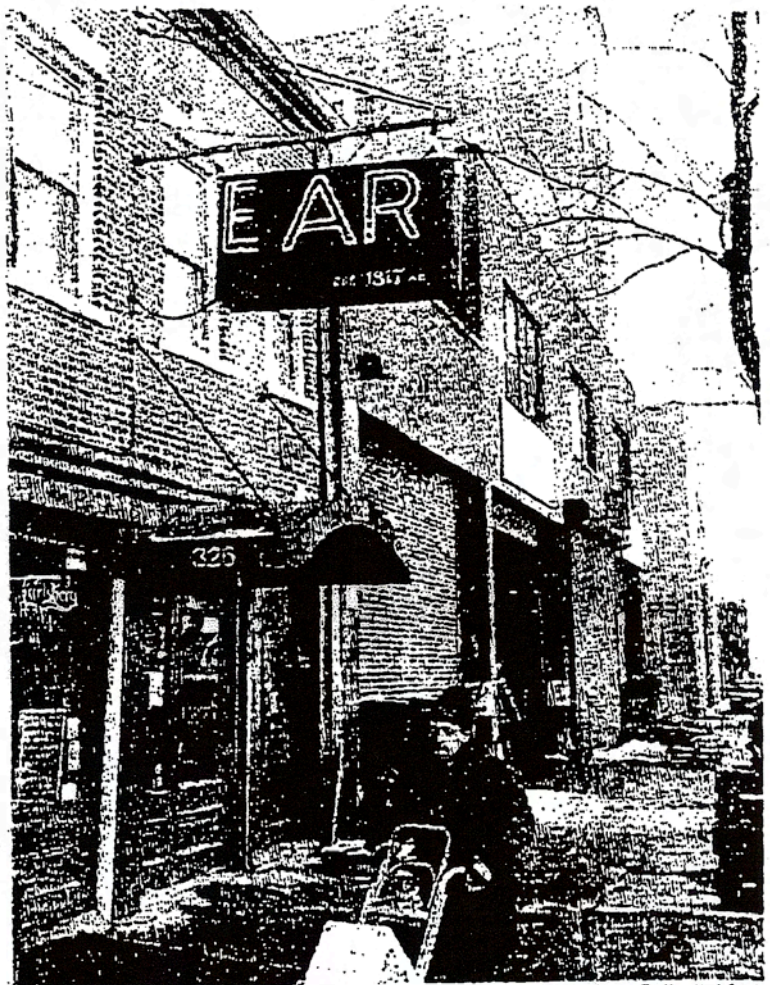
Mr. Johnson's tower also appears to face an uphill battle before the Board of Standards and Appeals, to obtain a variance for its residential units — the area is zoned for manufacturing — and for the height of the building.

"We agree with community boards more than 92 percent of the time," said Pasquale Pacifico, executive director of the standards board.

Richard P. Hayman, who owns the Ear Inn, is concerned about the building's height. He worries that construction work could jeopardize the fragile frame town house. He is negotiating with Place Vendome Realty, the project managers and exclusive brokers, for a transfer of the air rights to his inn, and he hopes he can use the talks to minimize any threats to it. "This project will either make or break the building," he said.

Alan Ritchie of Philip Johnson/Alan Ritchie Architects P.C., had no comment except to say, through a spokesman, "The architect and the developer are sympathetic to the concern of the community."

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Richard Hevly/The New York Times