

SOHO The Buildings.

Mainly loft buildings, scattered residential, commercial, garages. Typical architecture - cast iron and _____. Some landmarks and arch. treasures. Building usage. Spaces in Bldgs: The typical 25x100 loft and why it is needed by artists. Last place in city with a concentration of lofts suitable for A's. Rentals and coops, some bldgs owned by artists. Spaces available for experimental dance & theatre.

The Streets: At day: trucks and loading. At night, safety & quiet. ^Refuse on St is semi-industrial, often provides inspiration for artists (see article by _____)

Relevant codes and requirements: sprinklers, steel shutters, freight elevators. Point of suitable for bus and ind. but not multi-family dwelling - BUT suitable for artists. Kind of renovations artists do: new safe wiring, new plumbing, general rehabilitation. Buildings safer because artists there.

Usage of bldgs by industry: why some stay, some move. Usage of bldgs by galleries.

SOHO: The people

Daytime: blue collar, craftsmen, luncheonettes, drivers, etc. Employment statistics. The artists in Soho: population increase since 1965, why and what difficulties; question of illegal residence. How artists live: % of space devoted to work (avg.), children * a good place for ch. esp. is schools legally could, serve them (what schools?). The ~~family~~ growing feeling of community in Soho. The Soho residents wish to affect their environment, participate in its development: idea interchanges, services provided to each other, participation in day care center (Anna Maria Nicholson), employment artists provide.

SOHO: The Soho Artists Association

An association formed ~~by~~ originally by artists in Smaller Soho, now extending to a's living in larger Soho - to formally represent ~~the~~ artists who are part of the SHo community. SAA formed in _____ 1969 when a g number of artists decided to find a solution to the problem of illegal residence in the area and to attempt to influence the ~~course~~ course of development of the area. Realization that Sohowas in fact becoming a cultural center of unique characteristics ~~involved~~ involved SAA in anciliary problems: preservation of landmarks, preservation of "small" loft spaces, cooperation with existiting businessmen, some kind of rent stabilization for the area that would be fair to businesses and artists, support of "breeder" industries in the area. ~~Involved~~ SAA soon began to function as an information center for artists offering or lookin for lofts ~~in~~ or buildings in Soho, and as a source of advice on matters related to legal and illegal occupancy. SAA grew rapidly: a surve y was made in the summer of 1969, a white paper ^{was} presented to the Planning Comm

Council-

Commission in 666, the cultural affairs ~~commission~~ (? name) held ~~thirteen~~ one of their meetings in Soho and discussed the problems of Soho artists, a fund-raising and membership-drive party has organized, meetings were held, an executive coordinating committee elected; SAA co-operated with members of the press and radio interested in publicizing the Soho situation, newsletters were mailed to Soho artists, a publicity committee and a planning committee were set up, SAA met with Elliott, contact was made with other civic groups of similar interests, the Soho story was presented to various organizations, a Soho Festival was planned,.... support sought... incorporation

Throughout, various alternatives (were discussed and explored) to ~~legit~~ legalize artists' residential use of lofts. (See The Solutions, p.)
 Affiliation with the Metropolitan Housing Commission (see Jeanie) was made.

5...

SOHO: The Problems.

Needs of artists for sufficient space at reasonable costs for working
storing and showing. Space where living is legal Reasonable
rentals and valid leases legal status ~~xxxxxxx~~ related to available
mortgage money to buy, rehabilitate buildings and lofts the access
to city services normally available to residents Dangers of re-zoning
and re-development -- dangers of spot evictions danger from urban
renewal ... danger of losing historical landmarks danger of stifling
the growth of ~~xxxx~~ a vital, energetic and community-minded district ...
problems of harassment, ~~xxx~~ blackmail and bribery directly due to illegal
occupancy dangers from improper rehabilitation of buildings due
to uncertainty of tenancy danger of losing the last concentration
of loft-type spaces suitable for artists, who would then move away from
NY and weaken the city's cultural vigour ... ~~xxxx~~ further alienation
of artists who are still trying and willing to work with the city to
find rational and practical solutions to community problems problems
related to developing definitions and regulations that will permit space
usage for artistic enterprises in developmental stages (i.e. space to
show work by burgeoning film-makers, dancers, theatre people, happeners,
etc. etc. as well as artists) basic problem of establishing a
meaningful and responsive dialogue between the creative community in NY
and government agencies... problem of preserving an area capable of no
housing "breeder industries" problem of developing viable and effective
relationships between business and art in the community (~~xxxxxx~~) to preserve
the interests of both (we will need skilled craft industries in SOHO that
can work with artists, i.e. ancillary industries, small but necessary.)

SOHO: The Solutions.

a) Impractical or unacceptable ones, stop-gap solutions: AIR, West-Beth, (we want to be a self-sufficient, independent community, not a gov. agency... we know our needs and want to have the power to solve our own problems) Spot Zoning, Re-zoning (dangers from developers),

b) Acceptable ones: Special categorization for artists as professionals who must live where they work, Amendment to M15 zoning conditions to permit artists to live ~~and~~ and work in M15 zone, Designation of Soho as a special cultural district wherein art activities can take place legally - without displacing industry. - Certification of who is an artist must include Soho representation

7....

SOHO; The Arguments and Misunderstandings

- 1) Artists are not a significant economic factor....directly and indirectly artists contribute to \$100 million of business activity (this figure may be higher)....add to "Culture Scene" NY Art Center of World.
- 2) Artists use too much space....why do they need it. percentage of avg. loft used for living....nature of art activity, big work, storage, new materials, experimentationx , space to show, the difficult question of "creative atmosphere", often several works going on at same time often collaboration with craftsmen & other artists, so space must be available ... growth of multi-media creates need for space.
- 3) Artists want a handout.... Not so. On contrary, want means to be self-sufficient and not a community liability
- 4) Fire hazard to area contrary is true, especially if legal occup. gives artists security to invest in proper rehabilitation.
- 5) Living in lofts is demeaning, unsanitary ,.unfit for children. (Aughh)
- 6) No shopping services in ~~xxxx~~ Soho . Services in adjacent areas are adequate. Principal services artists need are of industrial nature and are in area.
- 7) Artists are irresponsible and troublemakers - not so, A too busy with work. Civic resp. evident in Soho movement.
- 8) Soho wants city to give privileged status to artists. True, but no more so than theatre district, hospitals (Z), industry, business.
- 9) Anyone who pushes some oil paint around can call himself an artist. What about nuts like Carl Andre? ... There are ways of determining who is a serious artist, Soho willing to work on certification.

10) Concentration of hipsters - Soho too expensive for H,
Artists too serious for nonsense

11) Driving out industry.

8...

SOHO: Possible futures.

1) a vital, interesting cultural center adding to the reputation of NY as the Culture Capital of the World. Place where young artists can start out, develop, mature. Place where business and industry establishes breeding enterprises, busy with trucks and activity in daytime; at night transforms into lively district of cultural events. A noisy, busy district where the sounds of a jazz rehearsal mingle with the rumble of a truck, the declamations of rehearsing actors, the thumps of dancers, the chisels of sculptors, the electronic whine of experimental music.

2) Soho as it is today, but deteriorating because of restrictions. Continued harassment, rent-gauging. Artists begin to move out.

3) Re-zoning. Become honky-tonk because no planning for development. Entry of real estate speculation. More offices. Artists driven out.

4) Re-development. Historical landmarks lost. High rise profiteers move in. Spirit of community participation crushed. Public howl from artists will be heard internationally. Severe cultural blow to city.

9....

SOHO: Possible Services of Association

- 1) Information exchange on lofts.
- 2) Assistance in forming co-ops
- 3) Assistance in renovating buildings (advice)
- 4) Organization of Festivals
- 5) Organization of Savings and Loan Assoc.
- 5) Info. on ~~many~~ legal matters regarding building codes etc.
- 6) At some point, SAA could have a hall or central meeting place open at all times where social, cultural and business activities could take place.

SOHO; What to do NOW

Soho residents: become active in SAA, contribute information, start a new venture in Soho, exploit contacts that can help Soho, let SAA know what you are willing to do (demonstrate, address/write letters, etc.) develop proposals that SAA can implement, participate in Festival, give money.

Friends of Soho: contribute funds, help convince city of the need to keep art alive in NY, give SAA your name and address and let us know if you are willing to write a letter, telegraph, or in some other way participate in exerting pressure on governments (badly worded), assist artists and artists co-ops in financing the establishment of their studios, visit Soho and Soho artists as a collector, buy a building in Soho and rent to artists at a reasonable price, assist SAA in publicizing the Soho problem.

Informations Sources

2 articles in Village Voice

2 articles in Art Gallery

Article in East Village Other (to come)

Tapes from WBAI —

Article in New York Magazine (downtown galleries)

Jeanie's minutes

White Paper

Past Newsletters

Rapkin Report

Tapes of early meetings. (Ely).

People with specific info. (and good memories)

Jeanie

Bob Weigand (& Ingrid)

Ruth Richards (ATA stuff)

Mike Levine

Gerhardt Liebman

Julie Judd (expressway)