

SOHO – FROM BOHO TO BOBO: THE BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS
OF WEST BROADWAY

BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
SOHO: WHERE, WHAT, AND WHO	4
Where	4
What	7
Who	8
West Broadway Business Establishments	14
SOHO IN THE 1960s	16
Industrial Decline	17
Civic and Government Proposals	20
Opposition to Urban Renewal and LoMex	23
SoHo's Coop Buildings	27
West Broadway Business Establishments in the 1960s	30
SOHO IN THE 1970s	35
Media Attention	36
Legalization of Residences	37
Landmark Designation	42
A Changing Neighborhood	44
West Broadway Business Establishments in the 1970s	47
SOHO IN THE 1980s	52
Government Oversight	54
West Broadway Business Establishments in the 1980s	56
SOHO in the 1990s	59
SoHo Galleries Move to Chelsea	60
West Broadway Business Establishments in the 1990s	63
CONCLUSION	66
NOTES	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY	76

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. The Distribution of Residential Telephone Listings by Year in SoHo Loft Buildings

Table 2. Color Coding of Buildings and Business Establishments on West Broadway

Table 3. West Broadway Business Establishments - 1965

Table 4. West Broadway Business Establishments – 1970

Table 5. West Broadway Business Establishments – 1975

Table 6. West Broadway Business Establishments – 1980

Table 7. West Broadway Business Establishments - 1990

Table 8. Galleries in SoHo and Chelsea

Table 9. West Broadway Business Establishments – 2000

Table 10. West Broadway Business Establishments 1965 and 2000

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report

Figure 2. SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension Map, SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension Designation Report

INTRODUCTION

In the last 50 years SoHo has evolved from a decaying industrial zone to an upscale residential and commercial area. Over this period SoHo passed through stages from illegally occupied residential area to officially-endorsed artist enclave to expensive residential neighborhood – from Boho to Bobo. Boho refers to its bohemian incarnation in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s when artists were the dominant residential group. Bobo,¹ an abbreviation of bourgeois-bohemian, encompasses the 1980s-1990s when the population no longer consisted mainly of working artists, but wealthier professionals with bohemian attitudes married to bourgeois lifestyle and ambitions.

In the 1960s the City had intended to raze SoHo for a massive urban renewal project that included housing developments and a highway across the district. The general industrial decline and the potential for city-ordered demolition of the area led to growing loft vacancies as the low-end manufacturers vacated SoHo. The large lofts and cheap rents attracted artists who used the space for both studio and residence. These new residents had not organized themselves to settle in SoHo, but were an ad hoc movement of people -- artists and others -- drawn to unconventional cut-rate living space. “Most [artists] knew only a few others before settling there themselves.”²

As a residential neighborhood SoHo initially was bohemian by nature – rents were low and the environs were not attractive to traditional apartment dwellers. The pioneers had to contend with creating living spaces out of decrepit industrial lofts that were never meant for residential living. Basic amenities, such as grocery stores, garbage pick-up, and steady heat and hot water supply did not exist. Before legalization there was

the constant threat of eviction from landlords or city agencies. The early settlers were willing ” . . . to take risks and accept discomforts”³ in exchange for affordable, large spaces that could accommodate artistic pursuits. After the urban renewal proposals of the 1960s were defeated and residential loft-living for artists was legalized in 1971, the resident population stabilized. With legal sanction from the city for inhabiting the former manufacturing spaces as residences, more people were drawn to the lofts of SoHo. Loft-living was popularized by the media, especially in magazine articles that touted lofts as the cutting edge aesthetic for design and living. Though SoHo had been reserved by the city for artists certifiable by the Department of Cultural Affairs, others (middle-class and higher income professionals) also migrated to the district.

Throughout the 1970s, contemporary art galleries followed the artists, creating a locally-based arts economy supported by visitors interested in viewing the latest trends in visual art. For a time “SoHo became a one-industry town, embedded in a larger city, and that industry was the production of contemporary art.”⁴ In addition to galleries, performance spaces were founded that featured alternative theater, modern dance, and progressive music. More lofts became available and by mid-decade the residential population and the tourist population had achieved a critical mass and could now support additional local businesses. Boutique clothing stores and stylish restaurants were established on West Broadway, SoHo’s Main Street, and eventually throughout the neighborhood.

In the 1980s as SoHo underwent its own process of gentrification, the bohemian settlers from earlier years decried the continuing residential and commercial development of their neighborhood. Lofts, rentals or coops, were no longer cheap and the new tenants

were not artists. Stores and restaurants became increasingly upscale and old-time residents could not afford to shop or eat at most of them. The neighborhood had become a “destination” and tourists crowded the sidewalks on the weekend. SoHo became a more refined area with renovated lofts and retail establishments that catered to a different clientele. By this stage SoHo no longer resembled its former bohemian self and was now a Bobo neighborhood.

The general trend toward ever-more expensive commercial establishments and escalating real estate prices continued through the 1990s. Some artists cashed-out their lofts and moved to new art neighborhoods in the outer boroughs or out of the city. SoHo real estate became too expensive for newly arrived artists, and high rents prompted galleries to leave SoHo and relocate to West Chelsea, a neighborhood of even larger warehouse-like spaces. By the end of the 1990s SoHo’s era as the avant-garde art center of Manhattan was over and its new identity as a trendy neighborhood for shopping and dining had begun.

West Broadway is the illustrative case-in-point for the evolution of SoHo. Successive businesses along the same commercial corridor trace the ever-changing history of the neighborhood. Over the five blocks in SoHo there was a constant movement of businesses in and out of the buildings along West Broadway. In the sixties new enterprises were still industrial and commercial concerns, just different companies. From the 1970s onward the new types of businesses along West Broadway – galleries, restaurants, clothing boutiques and retail outlets – represented a shift in the orientation of SoHo from an industrial backwater into a hip and increasingly affluent residential community.

SOHO: WHERE, WHAT, AND WHO

Where

In the early 1960s, SoHo was referred to as the South Houston Industrial Area in a report for the City Planning Commission (CPC). The name in that report reflected the area's long-standing character from the mid-1800s through the post-World War II era as a center of industrial and manufacturing establishments. Only in the late 1960s as artists settled the neighborhood did it acquire its new designation, SoHo, an abbreviation for South of Houston, adapted from the earlier CPC report. While, there are different accounts about how and when this area was first called "SoHo", by the late 1960s the abbreviation was in use by the SoHo Artists Association, city agencies, and the media.

Defining SoHo's boundaries can represent either official or unofficial, locally-recognized borders. Official and unofficial conceptions have always agreed on the northern and southern borderlines: Houston Street on the north and Canal Street on the south. The view of the eastern and western borders, however, has been more fluid over time, both officially and unofficially.

In 1973, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District bounded on the north, south, east, and west by the south side of Houston Street, the north side of Canal Street, the west side of Crosby Street, and the east side of West Broadway (figure 1). The Commission's report does not explain why the west side of West Broadway or streets east of Crosby Street were not included, although both contain cast iron buildings, the commercial structures dating from the 19th century that give SoHo its unique architectural character.

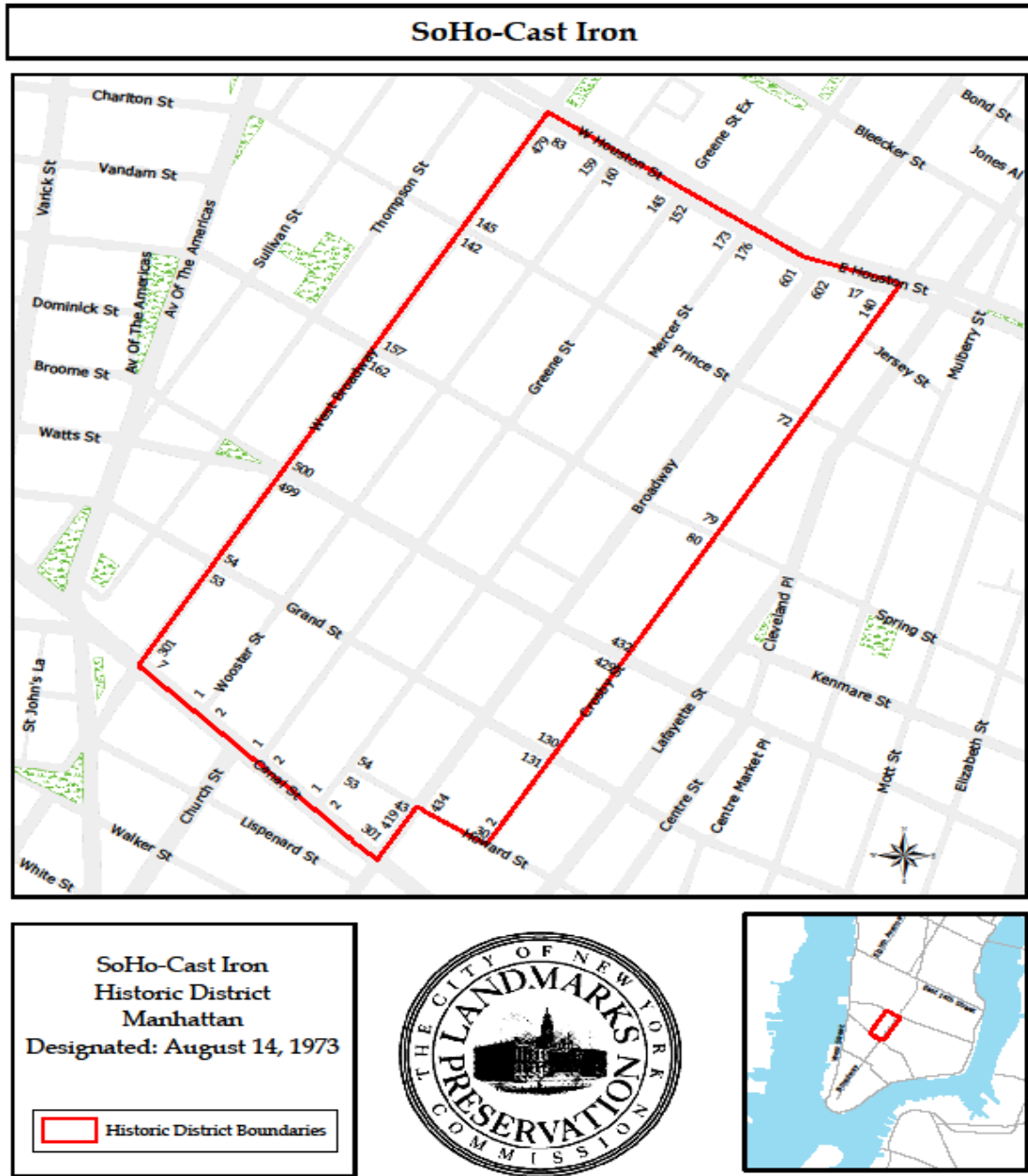


Figure 1. SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report ⁵

In May, 2010, the Landmarks Preservation Commission expanded the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District to include the west side of West Broadway north of Broome Street and the eastern boundary was moved to run generally along Lafayette Street (figure 2).

With this expanded definition, more cast iron buildings were now given landmark protection and the officially designated area encompassed more of what locals recognized as SoHo.

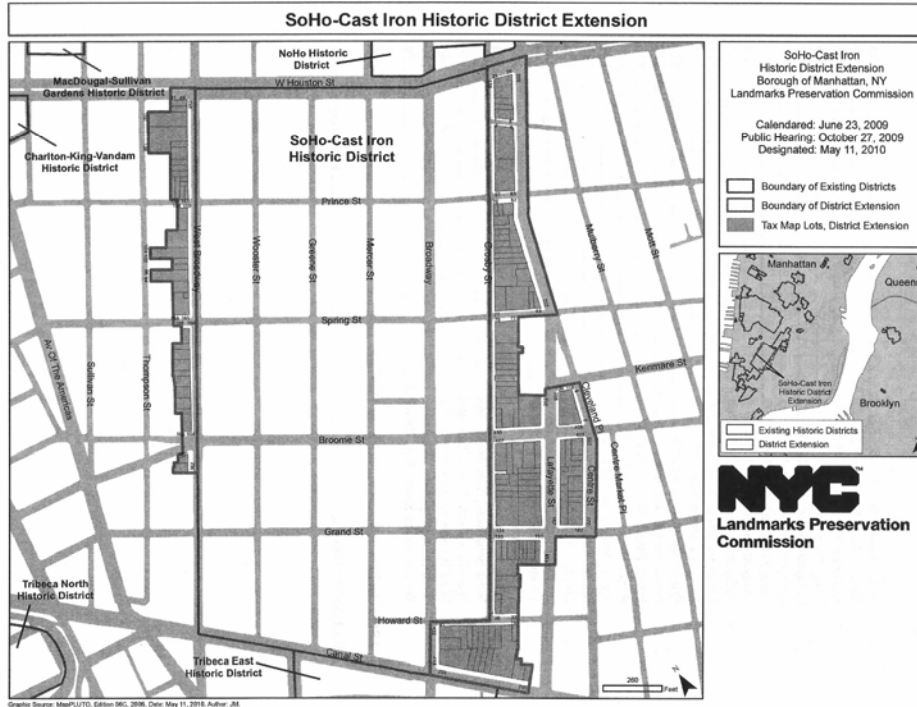


Figure 2. SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension Map, SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension Designation Report.⁶

Unofficially, as early as the initial landmarking in 1973, SoHo was seen as extending eastward to Lafayette Street. East of Lafayette was the western edge of Little Italy, a neighborhood of tenement style buildings with an already recognized and separate identity. By the 1980s, local residents viewed the western border of SoHo as Sixth Avenue. The few streets between West Broadway and Sixth Avenue included non-cast

iron commercial buildings south of Broome Street, and the tenement style buildings north of there. Those tenement buildings comprised an area often termed the ‘South Village’. Historically, that northwestern portion of SoHo was populated largely by Italian-Americans associated with St. Anthony’s church on Houston Street, a separate neighborhood from Little Italy. As the Italian-Americans moved to the outer boroughs or suburbs during the 1970s, they were replaced by young professionals who identified their residential location as “SoHo.” In the 1980s, the storefronts in this portion of SoHo became inhabited by trendy restaurants and boutiques similar to the rest of the neighborhood.

What

SoHo’s buildings range from Federal-era brick houses to modern construction, but it’s the cast iron buildings that distinguish the area. The cast iron buildings were erected in the mid-to-late 1800’s utilizing the new technology of mass-manufactured cast iron. Cast iron framing enabled larger floors for industrial and commercial use (warehouses, stores, hotels) and bigger windows to permit more natural light into the interiors. The new cast iron buildings stood in “contrast to the understated Federal and Greek Revival red brick buildings with small multi-paned windows that formed the backdrop of the early city.”⁷

Buildings in SoHo were either wholly constructed using cast iron or cast iron facades were pasted on the front of existing buildings to give them a more updated look. Built before passenger elevators had come into widespread use, the cast iron buildings in

SoHo were generally four to six stories high. Inside the lofts, iron columns provided internal structural support permitting spacious, open interiors with high ceilings. Cast iron was an early example of pre-fabricated building where the iron was cast in molds at a foundry, ordered from a catalogue, and bolted together onsite. The new technique greatly reduced construction time and cost, but still offered the possibility of elegant facades in a range of architectural styles. The original “. . . owners and builders of iron structures intended their buildings to look like stone. . .faithfully copied popular Renaissance stone designs, and then painted the buildings in typical light stone colors.”⁸

Although cast iron construction was not limited to SoHo the district contained “. . . the largest concentration of full and partial cast-iron facades anywhere in the world,”⁹ according to the original landmark designation report. The Haughwout Building on Broadway is often cited as a prime example of cast iron architecture, but the AIA Guides to New York City (prepared by the American Institute of Architects) observed that each building is not an individual monument. The cast iron buildings should be seen as “parties to whole streets and blocks that, together, make the *most glorious* urban commercial groupings that New York has ever seen.”¹⁰ It was the close quartering of so many cast iron buildings, especially along Greene Street and Broome Street that created an architecturally distinct area.

Who

SoHo had been designated as a manufacturing zone in the city’s 1961 Zoning Resolution and residential uses were therefore excluded. Because residential occupancy of a loft was not legal, early residents did their best to remain undetected by city

authorities. Consequently, there are no official records of the arrival of residents into SoHo. Some have claimed that artists and other pioneering residents lived in SoHo as early as the 1950s. At a 2007 SoHo fundraiser for Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Doug Hawley was celebrated as SoHo's longest tenured resident, having moved to a building at Spring and Wooster in 1952.¹¹ The 1983 census of SoHo and NoHo by the Department of City Planning records some residents, (artist and non-artists) who had lived in the area prior to 1963. However, most estimates and the few surveys of SoHo's population indicate that artists moved into the area in significant numbers beginning in the mid-1960s when SoHo loft living became an open secret in the arts community.

Only in the late 1960s, when the first coops were formed, is there actual documented evidence of the settlement of artists in the neighborhood. Coops are a type of collective real estate ownership peculiar to New York. A building is legally structured as a corporation and tenants buy shares in the corporation that correspond to the actual space they occupy. Although coop residential apartment buildings had existed for decades in New York, the artist coops in SoHo were initiated in 1967. With their participation in coops, artists became real estate owners even if actually residing in the building they owned was still illegal. These early coops were organized by George Maciunas, an artist of the Fluxus Movement and entrepreneur, who had a vision of creating an artist neighborhood in SoHo.

While the Census Bureau had always counted residents in lower Manhattan there are multiple problems with utilizing Census Data to track the SoHo population. Since 1960 the national census is initially collected by mailing out forms to residences. Since the lofts were not official residences and the tenants tried to hide their existence, local

residents likely did not receive or respond to official requests to document their presence. Also, the Census Tracts (small subdivisions of a city/county) that the Census Bureau uses to report aggregated population data for a neighborhood do not correspond to the outlines of SoHo. Census Tracts 43, 45, 47 and 49 all contain a piece of SoHo, but they also include areas outside of central SoHo, (e.g., Little Italy and the South Village), whose populations would dominate and distort the data.

Some researchers of SoHo have generated estimates about population growth based on secondary indicators rather than definitive population data. These estimates at least suggest the trends in SoHo’s population during the decades of its development as a residential neighborhood. James Hudson, in his book *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan*, used residential telephone listings in SoHo loft buildings to quantify the population of loft dwellers.

Table 1. The Distribution of Residential Telephone Listings by Year in SoHo Loft Buildings¹²

Year	Residential Telephones	Buildings with Residential Telephones	Ratio of Residential Telephones to Buildings
1965	100	54	1.85:1
1967	127	63	2.03:1
1969	267	104	2.58:1
1971	357	131	2.72:1
1973	511	166	3.08:1
1975	712	204	3.49:1
1977	914	224	4.08:1

Source: New York Telephone Directories

The data is based on 403 structures classified as loft buildings by the Real Property Assessment Department of the City of New York in 1977. In general, the table shows the growth of the residential population in SoHo from the mid-1960's through the latter part of the 1970s defined by the number of residential telephone listings. There were a small number of residential telephone listings in 1965 and 1967 (just over 100), an indication that artists had arrived in the early sixties, but not in significant numbers. The low ratio of telephones per building in 1965-67 suggests that early inhabitants of a loft building were individual renters, rather than a large number of renters per building or coop conversions. The numbers grew quickly, especially in the 1970s after SoHo loft residences were legalized. From 1971 to 1977 residential telephone listings grew by more than 543 lines to over 900 residential phones. The data demonstrates that SoHo residential loft dwellers were few during the 1960s, but substantially increased in the 1970s, mainly after legalization. Also, over time there was a higher ratio of telephones to buildings as residential occupants seemed to inhabit specific buildings. By 1977 there were residential telephones in 224 buildings, over half of SoHo's loft buildings.

Over the years there were limited surveys of SoHo's population, particularly the artists inhabiting lofts. The Artists Against the Expressway (AAE), an organization of SoHo artists opposed to the Lower Manhattan Expressway, conducted a census in 1968 to document the existence of a local population. The organization's survey registered twelve buildings owned by individual artists, fourteen buildings owned by artist coops, and 107 rental lofts used by artists.¹³ A year later the City Planning Commission, in connection with their review of the proposal to legalize loft living in SoHo, sponsored a survey of SoHo' industrial establishments and residential population. The census identified fifteen

artist coops in twenty-two buildings, seven more buildings owned by one artist, and more than 2,000 other residents living in 660 lofts.¹⁴ The two population surveys in two consecutive years produced similar results for artist-owned buildings. The only difference was the estimate of the number of residential lofts, but AAE's census was confined to artists living in lofts while the CPC included all residents. Taken together the reports describe a neighborhood with a visible and growing residential population.

In 1983 the City Planning Commission organized a more comprehensive census of SoHo and NoHo residents.¹⁵ A newly emerging neighborhood, NoHo (an abbreviation of North of Houston) was a small area with loft buildings located north of eastern SoHo and west of the East Village. An initial inspection of building exteriors by the CPC suggested there were approximately 2200 residential floors in SoHo and NoHo combined. The census was conducted by in-person interviews with 215 households, around 10% of the estimated residential units (floors were considered equivalent to units). The questionnaire included typical census information about occupants, such as age, occupation, length of residence, occupancy status (renter or owner), and size of residence. Overall, the census demonstrated that there were still many artist residents in SoHo, some of whom had been resident in the neighborhood for years. The census also revealed that there had been an influx of non-artists into lofts in more recent years.

Although the data often included both neighborhoods, SoHo's area, households, and population were significantly larger than NoHo and consequently the census was considered to generally exhibit the characteristics and trends in SoHo. The total population for both neighborhoods was estimated to be 8700 persons. Based on the census, the vast majority (95%) lived in lofts and were over eighteen years of age (83%).

Half of the loft dwellers owned their space and half rented, and the majority of owners (77%) had bought their units prior to 1980 with over one-third having purchased prior to 1976. In SoHo's core (west of Broadway, from Grand Street to Houston Street), the median length of residency in lofts was 8 years meaning that 50% of the population had lived there since 1975. Of the total loft households, 84% included a self-defined artist and 64% of loft households had a potentially certifiable artist in residence, but only 30% had gone through the certification process.

An important trend is revealed in the duration in time of residence in loft units by the census categories of Artists (already certified by Department of Cultural Affairs or potentially certifiable) versus Others (including some self-described, but not certifiable artists). Of the Artist loft occupants in 1983, over two-thirds (68%) had moved to SoHo-NoHo before 1980 compared to just over half (53%) of Others loft occupants. From 1981-1983 just under one-third of Artist residents had moved to the area while nearly half (47%) of Others residents had located in SoHo-NoHo in the previous three years. The data demonstrates that the influx of Others relative to Artists accelerated in the 1980s.

The SoHo-NoHo occupancy census in 1983 describes neighborhoods that were dominated by adult loft-dwellers, especially artist loft-dwellers, but also neighborhoods in transition. Though both neighborhoods had always had non-artist residents, the trends in occupancy shown in the census pointed toward a growing percentage of non-artists. Although legalization of loft residences in 1971 had reserved SoHo for certifiable artists, more non-artists, especially after 1981, were settling in both areas.

The different population estimates and surveys do not provide consistent data over time, but do tell a consistent story of SoHo's residential population growth. The

early pioneers arrived in the late fifties and early sixties. By the end of the 1960s, the population was large enough to organize themselves as a neighborhood. After loft living was legalized in 1971, a steady flow of people into lofts began and their presence converted SoHo from an industrial to residential district. The CPC survey of 1983 also revealed that by the early 1980s more of the recent arrivals were non-artists.

West Broadway Business Establishments

Color Coding

The tables in the following pages depicting maps of West Broadway's business establishments are based on the listings of non-residential telephones in New York Telephone's address directories. The companies are categorized by the nature of their business and coded by color (table 2). The businesses typical of SoHo in its industrial period in the 1960s are represented in shades of gray - commercial (light gray), industrial (medium gray), and automotive (dark gray). Other types of business establishments are also identified by a particular color: blue for food-related businesses, pink for clothing stores, green for art-related enterprises, and purple for other kinds of retail shops. The miscellaneous other businesses (sole proprietors, hotels, real estate brokerages and Dotcoms in the late 1990s) are few in number, but are depicted in peach, orange, or yellow. Religious institutions, of which there is only one on West Broadway, are colored in brown.

The buildings often housed more than one business establishment and therefore one color per building does not mean only one business, but just one type of business.

Also, one address may contain multiple colors displaying different types of business establishments inhabiting the same building. An increasing quantity of colors per building represents an accumulating number of different types of businesses in the same edifice. Older industrial and commercial firms may have inhabited more space in each building relative to the new businesses. Also, more businesses in each building indicates the declining vacancy rate since the commercial surveys of SoHo buildings in the early sixties.

Table 2. Color Coding of Buildings and Business Establishments on West Broadway

Type of Business	Color
No business/non-residential phone	White
Commercial	Light gray
Industrial	Medium gray
Automotive (garages, service station, auto repair)	Dark Gray
Food Establishments (delis, diners, food shops)	Light blue
Restaurants	Medium blue
Clothing low end	Light pink
Clothing high end	Medium pink
Art/Gallery Other (e.g., posters shop, not for profit institutions, performing arts)	Light green
Commercial Fine Arts Gallery	Medium green
Retail low end	Dark purple
Retail high end	Light purple
Hotel	Yellow
Sole Proprietorship	Peach
Other Business (e.g. publications, dotcom, real estate)	Orange
Religious	Brown

SOHO IN THE 1960s

At the start of the decade SoHo was still an industrial neighborhood, but in material decline as larger and more profitable manufacturing businesses had abandoned the area. The overarching trend of de-industrialization in older urban centers was coupled with local civic and government redevelopment proposals that precluded investment in buildings and businesses. Throughout the 1960s, SoHo just managed to avoid the total destruction envisioned by plans for large-scale urban renewal and the Lower Manhattan Expressway (LoMex). The City Planning Commission was the primary government agency that determined the fate of those projects and the neighborhood. A change in the Planning Commission's perspective on wholesale urban renewal, a strategy that had been the basis of city planning for much of the 20th century, was essential for SoHo's survival. Political protests from reformist politicians and residents of lower Manhattan, including the artists of SoHo, pressured the CPC and Mayor to abandon these redevelopment programs.

During the 1960s artists in SoHo were “. . . a shadow presence”¹⁶ in the neighborhood. As lofts were vacated by commercial tenants, artists and other residents took their place, lured by low rents for large spaces in New York's expensive residential real estate market and undeterred by their illegal residential status. The narrative of SoHo's early days includes the various strategies and subterfuges used by the loft dwellers to hide their presence. Newcomers were advised by existing loft tenants to use black-out shades at night, avoid hanging plants in the windows, not to answer the bell unless expecting someone because it could be someone from the Buildings Department,

and to dispose of garbage in various street cans away from their residence. If a Building Inspector did arrive at the occupant's door, considerable effort was made to conceal or disguise kitchen facilities, beds, and anything else that would suggest that the loft was used as a residence.

Though still largely a manufacturing district, the shift toward a bohemian residential neighborhood had begun. Lacking alternative commercial tenants, owners were reduced to renting lofts to any comers, including artists that might illegally use the space as a residence. Anticipating that their buildings would be condemned to make way for urban renewal, the owners expected that the new artist residents would only “. . . occupy the vacant loft spaces during an interim period.”¹⁷ The artists moving into SoHo were not seen as offering “a solution to an urban problem, but simply as a temporary population filling up spaces being abandoned by departing firms.”¹⁸ The early residential settlers in SoHo benefited by the threat of urban renewal because a lack of competition for the spaces kept lease rates low for renters. And later the devalued buildings were affordable for the organization of artist coops, an important step in the evolution of SoHo in the second half of the 1960s.

Industrial Decline

By the late 1950s SoHo's buildings and businesses had suffered a slow decay that had begun in the 1920s. The larger and more profitable concerns had departed the area earlier in the century when printers and garment manufacturing had moved north to midtown. The lofts of SoHo were now populated by producers of low-cost goods -- iron, glass, boilers, flooring, apparel, cardboard, stuffed animals, textile recyclers (rag-balers),

waste-paper recyclers, and assorted commercial service companies. A number of lofts were used as warehouse space filled with combustible material, either fabric or paper. SoHo was called Hells' Hundred Acres by the Fire Department due to numerous fires in the decrepit structures. A particularly large fire in November of 1960 destroyed three buildings, and led to the deaths of three firemen. In Philip Benjamin's article on November 20, 1960 in the *New York Times*, SoHo's loft district was described as "an explosive tinderbox – the worst fire hazard in the city." The Fire and Buildings Departments organized crackdowns on building owners who then made only minimal changes to comply with fire and building codes.

The decline of manufacturing in SoHo was part of a larger trend after World War II when industrial employment declined in favor of the service sector and manufacturing moved out of the urban cores in the Northeast and Midwest. Fewer factories were needed after the war effort wound down and the peacetime economy re-oriented itself toward services. Also, as modern manufacturing became more mechanized factory workers were displaced by machines. Up through the 1970s manufacturing employment continued its steady decline from the peak year of 1947, a drop of 8% from 1947-1977 according to Department of Commerce data.¹⁹

The relocation of manufacturing in the post-war period was intertwined with the general "... redistribution of population, commerce and industry from the center of cities to the suburbs, and from the northeastern and midwestern to the sunbelt states."²⁰ The migration of industry was due to changes in transportation and technology that disadvantaged older urban centers. Noyelle and Stanback, in their review of the economies of American cities, examined the shift in manufacturing from the Snowbelt

(Midwest, Northeast) to the Sunbelt (South, West). By their estimates, from 1959-1976 industrial employment in the Snowbelt declined by 10% while the Sunbelt saw a comparable increase.²¹

The departure of industry from SoHo was one more example of the prevailing course of manufacturing in the country, exacerbated by the age and design of SoHo loft buildings described by Hughes and Sternlieb in their book on the post-industrial American economy. “The classic case in point would be the loft structures of New York. These multistory rental manufacturing facilities hark back to a day of small entrepreneurs – catering to small scale vendors.”²² SoHo’s cast iron buildings had become functionally obsolete for most modern industrial purposes. Though the interior spaces in SoHo were capacious by 19th century standards, modern manufacturing processes necessitated much larger one-story buildings with off-street loading docks and wide streets to accommodate new tractor-trailer trucks. The large windows of the cast iron buildings that admitted abundant natural light were no longer advantageous after electric lighting became commonplace. The vertical character of SoHo buildings, with only one elevator, was inefficient for moving goods to loading platforms at street level. In Stratton’s book, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness*, he identifies the limitations of loft spaces: “Twenty-five feet wide and one hundred feet long, this structure is now too small for high-competition industry, and its ancient elevator . . . is enough to rattle the confidence of even the most optimistic merchandising tenant.”²³

Civic and Government Proposals

Urban Renewal

SoHo building owners and businesses had to contend with the threat of urban renewal plans. Building owners let their properties deteriorate because they expected the city, utilizing its eminent domain powers, would condemn the buildings. Even if owners had wanted to make improvements to buildings, banks would not finance renovations in buildings that might be demolished. Real estate developers were deterred as well by the possibility that the city would soon bulldoze the entire area. New commercial businesses were unwilling to make the investment or commitment to locating in SoHo.

Lower Manhattan's financial district was also a deteriorating area of the city. Wall Street firms and corporate headquarters had relocated to Midtown where the buildings were newer, with expanded floor space and infrastructure adapted to modern corporate requirements. The Rockefeller family, with large landholdings in the financial district, wanted to revitalize Lower Manhattan. In 1955 Chase Manhattan Bank, controlled by the Rockefellers, committed to building their headquarters there. As leaders of the business group, the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, the Rockefellers worked with the City on a comprehensive development plan for lower Manhattan below Canal Street throughout the 1950s and 1960s, culminating in the "Plan for New York City" written by the City Planning Commission in 1969.

The goal of this latest plan for lower Manhattan was to create a district of financial firms and corporate headquarters with residential buildings on the fringes for the employees of those companies. The plan would require displacing or relocating other

businesses that did not fit the profile, including manufacturing and industrial firms. The Washington Market, a wholesale produce market on the western end of the financial district would be relocated to Hunts Point in the Bronx and supplanted by the World Trade Center. New housing, Battery Park City, would be built on the landfill created by the development of the World Trade Center, replacing the dilapidated piers along the Hudson River.

The lower Manhattan plan did not extend to SoHo, but other civic groups put forth their proposals for the area between Canal and Houston based on the expected renewal of the financial district. In 1962 The City Club of New York, a civic organization concerned with housing and business redevelopment, published a study on SoHo titled “The Wastelands of New York City.”²⁴ The study was based on a survey of the buildings on one block to assess the types of businesses and vacancy rates. The object of the study was to demonstrate that SoHo was an underused district of little economic importance to the city and therefore a prime candidate for urban renewal. In the study, the President of the City Club and author, I.D. Robbins, described the derelict condition of the buildings, high vacancy rates, the low-end nature of the businesses, and warehouses used as dead storage. Robbins deemed SoHo a commercial slum that should be razed and replaced by middle and upper-income housing.

Another group, MI-COVE (Middle Income Cooperators of the Village), headed by Charlotte Schwab, and claiming to represent 1000 families in Greenwich Village, lobbied Mayor Wagner in 1960 to tear down SoHo’s buildings and redevelop the area for middle-income housing. MI-COVE wanted SoHo to be the site of Mitchell-Lama Housing, a New York state housing subsidy program established in 1955. The statute

allowed condemned property acquired through eminent domain to be allocated to private developers for the purpose of building low-to-middle income housing as coops or rental buildings.

Lower Manhattan Expressway

The Lower Manhattan Expressway (LoMex) was a proposed 10-lane highway that would connect the bridges over the East River with the Holland Tunnel, which runs under the Hudson River from Manhattan's West Side to New Jersey, relieving traffic congestion on Canal Street and other cross-town thoroughfares. A primary advocate was Robert Moses, a state and city official who oversaw the construction of highways, bridges, parks, and major urban renewal projects in New York City and the surrounding metropolitan area in the mid 20th century. In the 1960s other organizations, primarily business associations like the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, lobbied for LoMex. Organized labor was also a supporter because union workers would benefit from employment on the project. The proponents touted the Expressway as a rapid and efficient truck route through Manhattan, facilitating the ability of businesses in the city to transport goods to consumers across the country.

The proposal for LoMex initially appeared in the 1929 Regional Plan Association report, "Plan of New York and its Environs," and was officially approved by the City Planning Commission in 1941 without a specific route or type of construction. In 1943 the City Planning Department recommended a route on the south side of Canal Street, but postponed its construction until the Brooklyn-Battery-Tunnel and FDR Drive along the east side of Manhattan were completed. In 1946 and 1955, Robert Moses proposed

LoMex to be included as part of city planning studies with a new route along Broome Street in the midst of what would eventually become SoHo. Moses got support from the Federal Government in 1955 and Tri-State Transportation Commission in 1966 despite ever-rising cost estimates and perhaps false assumptions that Federal monies would fund most of the expense. Political support, especially from the Mayor's office, waxed and waned through the decades since building LoMex would mean condemning buildings along the route, displacing residents and businesses across Manhattan from the East River to the Hudson River.

Opposition to Urban Renewal and LoMex

Urban Renewal

The Chairman of the City Planning Commission, James Felt, was not a supporter of the bulldozer methods previously used by Robert Moses for slum clearance. In response to the City Club of New York's appraisal of the SoHo area, in "The Wastelands of New York City" the City Planning Commission hired Chester A. Rapkin, the director of the Institute for Urban Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, to conduct his own study. Rapkin's sample of buildings incorporated twelve blocks, and his 1963 report, "The South Houston Industrial Area" produced findings that were contrary to the City Club's survey. The paper reported that "in general, it was revealed that, contrary to prevailing impression, the South Houston Industrial Area is devoted principally to production activities and not to storage."²⁵ Rapkin found lower vacancy rates and many businesses that he saw as viable, stable and solvent. Though the report did not make

policy recommendations for the Commission, Rapkin noted that demolishing the neighborhood and building residential housing would be expensive for the city, even with using available Federal monies. In addition, future tax revenues would decline compared to the real estate and business tax receipts from the area's current commercial usage.

Rapkin made a strong case that the businesses in SoHo were important to the city because they provided employment for 13,000 low-skilled and semi-skilled workers from the local minority populations (Puerto Rican and African-American) of the Lower East Side. Such employment opportunities would be very difficult for the city to replicate because many of the companies were downscale enterprises that were attracted to the area because “. . . of the large supply of space available at modest rents, averaging \$.80 per square foot per year.”²⁶ Those cheap rents were only a third of the cost of new loft space in Manhattan. Rapkin argued that the current SoHo businesses could not afford to relocate elsewhere in Manhattan, and that many might be forced to move out of the city or even shut down. The argument about lost employment opportunities for minorities had much influence with the City Planning Commission and Mayor Wagner.

Rapkin did agree with the City Club's assessment that the condition of the buildings in the area was substandard with some that should be condemned outright, saying “. . . the structures are obsolete and inefficient, and what is more important, contain health and fire hazards.”²⁷ Given that renovating or upgrading the buildings would incur costs to the building owners beyond what rents could justify, he supported only more diligent enforcement of existing building and fire safety codes. Rapkin believed that minor improvements would forestall rent increases and existing industrial employers would remain in place. “Rapkin's study, however, was probably overly

optimistic, primarily because he assumed that a good number of these firms would continue to operate at the margins of New York's economy."²⁸

Rapkin's report succeeded in derailing the proposals for razing the area to create a large development of residential apartments. Rapkin's emphasis regarding the importance of employment of local minority populations in the industrial and commercial enterprises of SoHo won the day with the City Planning Commission and the Mayor. But neither Rapkin nor the Commission foresaw that they were fighting a rear-guard action against the departure of manufacturing in this particular area, Manhattan, or the city at large. The larger economic trends that were propelling industry out of older metropolitan centers were already in motion and no local government plan for preserving low-end manufacturing businesses could reverse that course, accordingly "Manhattan was not destined to be a manufacturing center."²⁹

Lower Manhattan Expressway

LoMex, proposed decades earlier, took much more time and effort to defeat. Mayor Wagner waffled in his support for the expressway during the early 1960s, condemning and reviving the plan at intervals. In 1962 the New York Board of Estimate rejected budget appropriations for LoMex based on the prospect of new by-pass routes (the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge), upheaval of homes and businesses, and the loss of tax revenues from the demolished properties. The Board of Estimate also cited recent data that showed a decline in trucking and shipping jobs since 1960 and therefore a decline in traffic counts. The Board noted that the earlier 1958 traffic counts would be irrelevant by the time LoMex would be completed in 1978.

During his 1965 campaign Mayor Lindsay, had opposed LoMex, but once in office he reversed himself. In 1968 he supported a scaled-down LoMex project that would not be an above-grade highway, but enclosed in a below-grade cut or inside tunnels. No matter the proposal, there was constant opposition from different political spheres, such as the affected residents, politicians (Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton, and Congressman Ed Koch), and Jane Jacobs, an urban planning apostle and author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

In many respects, the LoMex debate exemplified the opposing views of Moses and Jacobs. Moses favored highways and extensive urban renewal planning, “the Raze and Raise philosophy.”³⁰ The wholesale destruction required by Moses’ urban renewal projects had provoked a backlash that was personified by Jacobs, who supported retaining small scale local neighborhoods instead of high-rise residential developments. It was a struggle between Moses who “...pushed to build a corporate city and Jane Jacobs who struggled to preserve the urban village.”³¹ At a raucous hearing on LoMex in 1968, Jane Jacobs was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. In 1969 The New York Scientists’ Committee for Public Information argued that the proposed highway would elevate carbon monoxide levels, a health hazard for residents living nearby, and their findings were presented to the Environmental Protection Administration, a new federal agency.

Artists in SoHo also organized against LoMex, forming a group named Artists Against the Expressway (AAE). Two residents of SoHo were active in the organization’s leadership, Julie Judd, wife of the sculptor Donald Judd, and Dorothy Johnson, a dancer and the wife of Sam Johnson, also a sculptor. Like the residents of other neighborhoods

that would be demolished for the Expressway, the artists were concerned about their homes. Julie Judd stated “The expressway would kill the last suitable place in the city for lofts.”³² They solicited support from famous artists, galleries, and museums. While AAE was not the most powerful group in the political opposition, SoHo artists had surfaced from their self-imposed hiding and were now openly involved in the political process where they were gaining valuable organizing experience and important community and political connections.

Under political pressure from many quarters and facing a difficult re-election contest, Mayor Lindsay finally withdrew his support for LoMex in July of 1969. The Expressway was officially “de-mapped” from the City Planning Commission’s regional plan. Governor Rockefeller drove the final stake in the LoMex plan when he terminated any potential state funding in 1971.

SoHo’s Coop Buildings

Artists had initially trickled into SoHo one-by-one and lived separately until coops began to be established where groups of artists, a term defined broadly to include visual artists, writers, composers and architects, bought and renovated buildings. The concept of artists buying lofts as studios and residences had originated in Greenwich Village in the early 1960s, and the first artist coop was initiated in 1963 under the auspices of Citizens for Artists Housing with money from the J.M. Kaplan fund. The first coop in SoHo, the Fluxhouse Cooperative II, was established at 80 Wooster Street in 1967 with \$20,000 from the J.M. Kaplan Fund and the National Foundation for

the Arts and Humanities, and a mortgage from the building's previous owner, the Miller Cardboard Company. Other coops followed, including 64-70 Grand Street, 33 Wooster Street, 451 West Broadway, 465 West Broadway, 469 West Broadway, 131 Prince Street, 537 Broadway, and 16-18 Greene Street. The mastermind behind these coops was George Maciunas, an artist who was not in the business of establishing coops for profit, but as more of a devotion to his dream of creating an artist district in SoHo. Maciunas organized fifteen coops between 1967 and 1975, with the first eleven completed by June 1968.

Maciunas did not form his coops according to the strict precepts of the law or even close to formal legal requirements. He was “imaginative, vigorously anti-establishment and thoroughly mischievous in his approach to bureaucracies.”³³ New York state law says a sponsor of a residential cooperative must prepare a Cooperative Offering Plan (prospectus) that includes a description of the property financials, by-laws, and proprietary lease, to be submitted for review by the New York state Attorney General. All that paperwork was too much for Maciunas and an obstacle in his path for quickly purchasing buildings and establishing artist coops. “Thus, Maciunas organized his Fluxhouses [the SoHo coops] as agricultural cooperatives, incorporating and filing them as such with New York's Department of State.”³⁴ In his newsletter in 1968, Maciunas conceded that he ran the coops, “. . . not necessarily in a legalistically correct way, but in a way to benefit the collective good.”³⁵

The Attorney General of New York state became aware that SoHo coop sponsors, specifically Maciunas, were evading the law. Consequently, the state Attorney General issued an injunction against him in 1970, enjoining him from further dealings in real estate. Maciunas ignored the injunction and just used other individuals as the legal front

for his continued activities in organizing SoHo coops. Later, the attorney general's office issued a subpoena for him, followed in 1975 by a warrant for his arrest. Maciunas, who lived in the basement of 80 Wooster Street, responded by fortifying his door, wearing disguises on the street, and creating a tunnel from his apartment to the street level to avoid arrest. During the years of coop development and renovation, Maciunas was also engaged in the manipulation of finances among the various coops, diverting funds from one coop to another to provide necessary monies for renovation or to stave off delinquency against mortgages or taxes. Those financial machinations were part of Maciunas' philosophy of collectivism, but some early coopers revolted and forced him out of his management role in their buildings. Maciunas' method of creating and sustaining coops was described by Jim Stratton, "It was a bit risky, and more than a little questionable, but in the end highly effective method of operation."³⁶

The formation of coops in SoHo not only drew new residents to the area but created a more deep-rooted population in the neighborhood. Artists and others who rented lofts did not expect that they would live in those spaces for long periods because of the constant threat of rent increases and eviction by building owners and the Department of Buildings. The uncertainty forced them to view their as lofts as temporary residences even if they valued their space and sweat-equity renovations. The coop members, by purchasing their buildings, had more at risk and therefore were more committed to their properties and living in the area. In the later effort to legalize loft living in SoHo, the coopers were the primary group engaging with city officials.

West Broadway Business Establishments in the 1960s

Table 3. West Broadway Business Establishments – 1965

	West Side Address	East Side Address
Houston Street	482	
	480	479
		477
	474-478	475
		473
	468-472	471
	464	465-469
		463
	462	457-461
	460	455
	458	453
	456	
	454	451
	452	445-449
	448	
Prince Street	436-442	435
	430-434	433
		431
		429
	426-428	427
	424	425
	422	423
		421
	418-420	419
		417
	414-416	413-415
	412	411
	408-410	407-409
	Spring Street	402-404
400		399
398		395-397
396		391-393
392-394		
390		387-389
386-388		383-385
382-384		379-381
378-380		375-377
376		
372-374		
Broome Street		370
	366-368	363
	362-364	361
	360	359
		357
	354	355
		351-353
		349
		347
		345
	344	343
	342	341
	340	339
	338	337
	Grand Street	336
		327-329
		325
		323
312		
310		311
308		307-309
302		301-305
Canal Street		

The character of West Broadway's businesses in 1965 represented the nature of the whole area, a district concentrated on commercial and industrial activity with few local residents. The map for 1965 (table 3) is almost completely gray (industrial, commercial, automotive). The southern half of the street contained a few automotive repair shops, service stations, and garages. The industrial businesses along the full stretch of West Broadway encompassed a variety of production facilities: auto springs, chemical products, boilers, machine and tool, flooring, dolls, air conditioning equipment, plumbing supplies, paper cartons, iron works, and glass. Other industrial firms were paper and waste recyclers and their related warehousing. Commercial businesses along West Broadway included trucking, messenger services, contractors, plumbing and heating repair, Import/Export, window shade distributors, moving companies, office equipment suppliers, and printers. Automotive, industrial and commercial businesses were present in 91% of the commercially occupied buildings along West Broadway with the largest share housing industrial concerns (49%) followed by commercial businesses in 37% of the buildings.

The few bits of color on the map, blue for food related businesses and peach for a sole proprietorship, are mostly casual food establishments like Teddy's Luncheonette, the Happy Deli and The Corner Delicatessen that catered to the workers in the area. There were just two restaurants along West Broadway, signified by the darker blue of two buildings. Near Houston Street, Robert Parent, a photographer (peach), was already in business. At the bottom of West Broadway, near Canal Street, St. Alphonsus Liguori Catholic Church, flanked by the Church Hall and Rectory, is colored in brown.

Table 4. West Broadway Business Establishments - 1970

	West Side Address		East Side Address		
Houston Street	482		479		
	480		477		
	474-478		475		
	468-472		473		
	464		471		
	462		465-469		
	460		463		
	458		457-461		
	456		455		
	454		453		
	452				
	450		451		
	448		445-449		
	Prince Street	436-442		435	
				433	
430-434			431		
426-428			429		
424			427		
422			425		
418-420			423		
414-416			421		
412			419		
408-410			417		
			413-415		
			411		
			407-409		
Spring Street	402-404		401		
	400		399		
	398		395-397		
	396		391-393		
	392-394		387-389		
	390				
	386-388		383-385		
	382-384		379-381		
	378-380		375-377		
	376				
	372-374				
	Broome Street	370		367	
		366-368		363	
362-364			361		
360			359		
354			357		
			355		
			351-353		
			349		
			347		
344			345		
342			343		
340			341		
338			339		
		337			
Grand Street	336		331-335		
			327-329		
			325		
	312		323		
	310		311		
	308		307-309		
302		301-305			
Canal Street					

The same map of West Broadway in 1970 (table 4) documents the changes through the rest of the sixties. Although more artists had moved to the area as renters or coop owners, SoHo was still primarily an industrial and commercial neighborhood. The new residents had little impact on the makeup of West Broadway's commercial corridor and the map is still largely gray (industrial, commercial and automotive). Those categories of business still inhabited 91% of the commercially occupied buildings, and remained the predominant types of businesses on the street. Though the map's colors suggest continuity because the types of establishments had not changed much, individual businesses had departed and other companies took their place. Overall, a larger number of industrial companies left West Broadway than moved into the same buildings.

Among the industrial businesses, Cella's Confections, occupying a large building just south of Grand Street, was a prominent arrival. Cella's Confections, a candy company known for their chocolate-covered cherries, maintained its presence on West Broadway into the 21st century, closing in 2005. There is less blue in the map as the number of food establishments declined with the departure of Teddy's Luncheonette, The Corner Delicatessen, and the Happy Deli. The Superette Food Market just south of Prince Street was the only new entry of a food-related business. The few peach-colored spaces included Robert Parent, a photographer already in place, and now Jared Bank, a frame maker, and Anthony Dapolito, the owner of the Vesuvio Bakery on Prince Street, a family-run enterprise since the 1920s.

For SoHo, the most material change in the color map is the arrival of art-related establishments (green). The 451 Workshop, a studio for neon light art, and City Walls, Inc., a non-profit arts organization that promoted public art, were now in place. The first

commercial fine arts gallery on West Broadway, O.K. Harris Works of Art, founded by Ivan Karp, was located on the east side of West Broadway between Prince and Houston Streets. The gallery was the harbinger of a trend in all of SoHo: contemporary art galleries moving into the neighborhood. The fine arts galleries serviced the local artist population by exhibiting their work and drew collectors and others to SoHo to see the latest trends in visual arts.

SOHO IN THE 1970s

A pivotal period in SoHo's development, the 1970s brought two major government decisions that facilitated the development of an arts neighborhood. The City Planning Commission legalized loft-living in SoHo, but limited it to only certifiable artists, and the Landmark Commission designated the physical infrastructure of cast iron buildings in the area to be preserved. In the 1970s loft dwellers had to adjust to the media attention that ended their undercover living arrangements and exposed the neighborhood to popular awareness and growing tourism. Legalization of loft living for artists in SoHo enabled existing residents to stay, but also encouraged others to join them. Landmarking the district effectively prevented developers from swinging a wrecking ball at the area's cast iron buildings though one developer made an attempt at a high-rise project. At the end of the decade, SoHo was "structurally intact, but now socially transformed."³⁷

Thus, legalization and landmarking stabilized the neighborhood for residents, changing the transient nature of loft living for artists into potentially permanent habitation of their residences and the neighborhood. Throughout the 1970s industrial and low-end commercial businesses continued to vacate the lofts and storefronts and were replaced by new types of enterprises - galleries, boutiques and restaurants. These new establishments served local residents as outlets for their art, places to shop and eat, and occasional employment. The new businesses were also dependent on the growing legions of visitors to SoHo. In the 1970s SoHo had developed a new economic base, no longer manufacturing, but art and tourism.

Initially, the local artists welcomed the changes. But by the end of the decade, many early inhabitants felt the area was evolving in ways that were no longer conducive to their original intentions: artists' settling and working in a neighborhood that they believed was both founded by and reserved for artists. The pioneers saw an increasing number of stores and restaurants that did not accommodate the local population of working artists, but only serviced visiting tourists. More importantly the real estate values, either rents or purchase prices, were fast escaping the reach of artists just beginning their careers. Instead, middle-class and upper-class urban professionals were now migrating to SoHo, drawn by the cachet of loft-living and the alternative life-style of the district. SoHo was still Boho, but the early settlers saw portents of gentrification and commercialization of the area.

Media Attention

SoHo residents had disclosed their presence by their participation in the political struggles against LoMex in the late 1960s. Their self-generated exposure was only the first step in creating a general public awareness of SoHo. Beginning in 1970 media coverage in magazines and newspapers focused on the inhabitants and spaces inside SoHo's lofts. Despite their illegal status various residents cooperated with the press, proudly displaying their lofts. Unlike earlier clandestine occupants these renters and owners, while acknowledging their illegal status, were seemingly undaunted about the public exposure of their existence and any consequent interference from city authorities.

In the early 1970s magazine and newspaper articles portrayed the discovery of SoHo. These articles celebrated the emerging arts district in a typical industrial neighborhood: noisy, dingy, dirty, truck-clogged, and without basic residential services (garbage collection, laundromats, supermarkets, schools). The feature articles described the area and the lofts as desirable real estate. According to Jim Stratton, an early resident of a West Broadway coop, “. . . since 1970, SoHo has also attracted the public imagination with the flamboyance of its solution to its problem.”³⁸ Charles R. Simpson’s 1970 article for *Life Magazine* was “Living Big in a Loft”, was followed by Dorothy Sieberling’s 1974 article for *New York* magazine titled “SoHo: The Most Exciting Place to Live in the City.” The media championed and defended SoHo’s identity as an artist enclave, as well as its struggle for legalization. Artists were presented as saving an urban area from government and developers. In a *New York Times* article on May 11, 1970, “Neighborhoods: SoHo is Artists’ Last Resort,” Grace Glueck quotes Bob Wiegand, active in the SoHo Artists Association, “This is the last place before the river.” Lofts were presented as a new era in interior design with large open spaces, high ceilings, wood floors, white walls, hanging greenery, and track lighting, and loft living was depicted as “. . . new, exciting and ‘where it was happening’.”³⁹

Legalization of Residences

Loft-living was still illegal in 1970 and residents’ continued the habitation of their spaces without guarantees or rights. The city, through the Buildings Department, could evict residents from lofts. Loft dwellers were vulnerable to building inspectors and were

forced into petty bribery to avoid eviction. “. . . if the inspectors had been honest, we would not be here now,” said one artist.⁴⁰ Loftlords would oust tenants in order to increase rents. In her May 11, 1970 *New York Times* article, Grace Glueck quoted a SoHo filmmaker, “The artists fix up their pads, put money into plumbing and wiring. Then the landlords evict them . . . to raise the next tenants’ rent.”

Early coop owners had legal title, but residing in their lofts was still proscribed by state law. Both renters and owners were concerned about losing the investments they had made to adapt their lofts to residential use. When renters moved out of lofts they tried to recoup those monies through an informal mechanism of charging a ‘key fee’ or ‘fixture fee’ to the individual who wanted to obtain the lease to the space. In exchange for the fee, the existing tenant would arrange an introduction for the prospective tenant to the landlord. In some cases the landlords facilitated these transactions in recognition of the previous tenants’ improvements. The amount of the fixture fee was dependent on the fixtures (electrical, plumbing, kitchen) installed in the loft to make it livable, but also the length and price of the lease.“ As late as 1976, both seller and buyer in this average SoHo transaction have tended to be an artist.”⁴¹ It was not as simple for owners to leave their spaces and they had more money at risk.

As early as the late 1960s, there were meetings of loft dwellers to talk about gaining official sanction for living in SoHo and the necessity of protective zoning. Renters were less enthusiastic about legalization because they feared it would only drive up rents. In their view it was better to exist incognito, accepting the possibility of discovery and eviction and the lack of neighborhood amenities (garbage pick-up), than risk the arrival of new potential tenants that would price them out of their lofts. The

owners, though fewer in number than renters, were more inclined to protect their investments. “From the beginning there was a schism with the renters though it was often unspoken.”⁴² The coop owners argued that the local population was now an established fact on the ground and the community’s involvement in Artists Against the Expressway and recent media coverage meant SoHo’s residents were no longer flying under the radar of city agencies. In the view of the coopers, “. . . avoidance failed to reflect new reality, that loft living had been exposed as an issue, and was on the agenda of public planning agencies.”⁴³

In a meeting at 80 Wooster Street in April 1969 locals had organized the SoHo Artists Association (SAA). The SAA included members that had been involved in the Artists Against the Expressway. The LoMex experience had given them political connections and contacts with Community Board 2 and the City Planning Commission. Over nearly two years, the SAA lobbied both groups for legalization of loft living in SoHo and rent control for loft tenants. Almost immediately, the CPC rejected any notions of rent control for lofts; they wanted no part in enlarging rent control regulations to commercial and manufacturing buildings. Though the SAA tried to protect renters from unregulated rent increases through the city’s general rent control and rent stabilization programs, the organization was more interested in the legalization of residences, the central concern of the coopers.

Previous entanglements with city agencies and the Mayor’s office had taught SoHo artists the value of broader community support. In May 1970, the SAA organized a weekend festival in SoHo “to publicize the artists’ fight to legalize loft living . . . [and] demonstrate the extent of the artistic community and its importance.”⁴⁴ Thousands of

people came to attend events held on the street: exhibitions and performances. Various artists opened their lofts to display their work, studio, and residence. The festival succeeded in promoting a general awareness of the neighborhood and the artists living there, but some residents questioned its effectiveness in gaining support for legalization.

Although the event had been organized in cooperation with the City Parks Department, other city agencies were not fully sympathetic to residency in SoHo lofts. The Fire Department and Buildings Department were concerned about compliance with safety and hygiene codes. The City Planning Commission voiced concern about industrial employers potentially forced out by competition for space from artist residents. The Commissioners' worries about the displacement of industrial employers by artists may have been sincere, but not overly realistic. As Simpson says in his book, art production is not economical, and "a weak competitor for urban space."⁴⁵ In response, Ingrid Wiegand, a video artist in SoHo, created the SAA position paper that claimed that artists were not displacing industry, but occupying abandoned space. The SAA also made the argument that art was an industry that contributed millions to the local economy. The artists' value to the city was not only "volume of trade and employment . . . but their presence contributed to making the City an attractive place to be."⁴⁶

In the end, the City Planning Commission, headed by Donald Elliott, was faced with difficult facts – industry was departing and growing numbers of residents were already in place in SoHo, including many who owned their buildings. The CPC's own survey of the SoHo district in 1969 revealed that industrial presence and employment had declined since the Rapkin Report six years earlier. The Commission understood that the city " . . . had to facilitate a disengagement from industry . . . while demonstrating

concern for retaining industrial jobs.”⁴⁷ The CPC was faced with competent advocates in building owners and residential tenants who had become adept at organizing political and community support. Evicting illegal renters may have been feasible, but forcing out tax-paying coop owners was far more problematic. Industrial tenants were uninterested and disorganized, and presented no effective opposition to the legalization of artist residents. Chairman Elliot recollected that there was “no countervailing force claiming the neighborhood . . . Industry never came to the hearings . . . They [Business] never defended their rights.”⁴⁸

The SAA had a number of important allies in their negotiations with the CPC. Various staff members of the CPC, including Mike Lewis, Michael Levine, Alicia Pool, and Adrian Kleiman, ultimately became supporters of the artists of SoHo. Another valuable ally was Doris C. Freedman, the Cultural Affairs Commissioner. She revived Citizens for Artists Housing, a group that included prominent artists, dealers, and collectors. Freedman argued to the CPC that worries about the sudden displacement of industry were misplaced. According to Freedman the area should be restricted to artists that her department would certify, and artists and light industry could continue to co-exist with relatively low rents for both.

In January 1971 the City Planning Commission finally voted to legalize residential use of manufacturing lofts by artists in SoHo. In June of that year the state legislature amended Article 7-B of the Multiple Dwelling law that relaxed building codes for those buildings. The new law referred to SoHo lofts as Interim Multiple Dwellings legal for residential use, but required one resident per unit to be an artist certified by the Department of Cultural Affairs in order for a building to get its Certificate of Occupancy.

Further, the buildings were required to bring themselves up to the relevant building code. Legalization was a major milestone for SoHo. It offered stability and potential longevity to residents of the neighborhood. In an often reported story about a 1971 SoHo community meeting to explain the new laws, one woman asked: “Does all this mean we can have kids now?”⁴⁹

Landmark Designation

Although residential usage had been legalized in 1971, developers could still apply to tear down buildings and construct new properties, destroying the loft buildings and interior spaces that had attracted artists to the area. The Landmark Designation of SoHo in 1973 shielded the neighborhood from real estate development by protecting the cast iron buildings from demolition or substantive exterior alteration. Landmarking SoHo preserved the special architectural character of a district of low-rise historic buildings, including many cast iron structures. The Friends of Cast Iron Architecture, an offshoot of the Municipal Arts Society headed by Margot Gayle, was the primary organization in the movement to landmark SoHo, the first commercial neighborhood to attain that status. The SAA, representing residents’ sentiments, supported their efforts because they appreciated their loft buildings, but also because landmark status would protect SoHo from real estate development.

The origins of the movement to preserve the buildings and neighborhoods in New York began in the 1960s in reaction to the destruction of the old Pennsylvania Station designed and built by McKim, Mead and White in the early 1900s. Its demolition began

in 1963, and it was replaced by a modern, non-descript building. Architects and their supporters lobbied the city to prevent the loss of additional historic and architecturally-significant buildings. In 1965 the city created the Landmarks Preservation Commission as an overseer to protect against any further demolition of such properties. “In one of its first actions, the Commission designated the E.V. Haughwout building [a cast iron building in SoHo] at the corner of Broadway and Broome Street as a New York City landmark.”⁵⁰

In the late 1960s, the Commission had begun to focus on SoHo. After much lobbying by the Friends of Cast Iron Architecture, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the SoHo-Cast Iron District in 1973 to preserve the area, especially its 19th century buildings. As a result, the buildings that characterized the area and provided homes for artists were no longer susceptible to real estate development, especially high-rise real estate projects.

The importance of the new designation was demonstrated by a development project proposed in 1972, just prior to landmarking. Charles Low, a developer, sought zoning variances from the Board of Standards and Appeals for a proposed 21-story public sports center on a large lot of lower West Broadway. The center was to include “tennis courts, an Olympic swimming pool and four levels of automobile parking. The facility would cater directly to Wall Street executives some twenty blocks to the south.”⁵¹ The SAA revived itself for the challenge of what the community saw as a real estate development completely out of character with the area. Low had backers in the city’s administration and garnered his own political support from the Italian neighborhoods in the South Village and Little Italy by promising residents limited, but free, access to the

Sport Center. Both the Board of Standards and Appeals and Community Board 2 approved the new development.

The SAA, through the assistance of Charles Jurist, a member of Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, contested the project in court on technical grounds. On behalf of nearby residents directly affected by the building, he sued the Board of Standards and Appeals because they had violated their own procedures. The legal machinations and delays ultimately dissuaded Low from the project, which he abandoned in 1973 at the time that SoHo received its landmark designation.

A Changing Neighborhood

In the early 1970s, SoHo was a home for artists and a destination for art lovers and the culture-curious. An influx of contemporary fine arts galleries appeared, and over time galleries lined both sides of West Broadway. Galleries, like artists, came for cheap, big space that could accommodate the larger works increasingly common in contemporary art. Paula Cooper introduced the first SoHo gallery in 1968 followed by Ivan Karp's O.K. Harris Gallery in 1969, the first gallery located on West Broadway. "In the Spring of 1970, the art publication Gallery Guide listed only three galleries in the Greater SoHo loft area. By the fall of 1973, their number had grown to more than forty, and in spring, 1976, there were more than seventy."⁵² The galleries also chose to locate in SoHo because of the proximity to artists, which "facilitated interaction between artist, dealer and client . . ."⁵³ For SoHo residents the galleries provided not only exhibition space for local artists, but a lively social scene at art openings. Soon, the galleries

became the economic basis of the community, attracting visitors that supported the surrounding retail stores and restaurants.

But later in the 1970s long tenured residents watched as SoHo developed in ways unexpected and unwanted. By mid-decade residents “. . . who pioneered the neighborhood are not pleased with what they see.”⁵⁴ In an article in the *New York Times*, “SoHo a ‘Victim of Its Own Success’” on November 24, 1974, Wendy Schuman wrote that SoHo “. . . was feeling the growth pangs and identity crisis of the changing neighborhood.” Local residents grumbled about the change in the neighborhood – the rising rents and hip scene unrelated to the arts. “Complaints about SoHo’s popularity, its commercialization and its growing domesticity are staples of local art talk.”⁵⁵

Through the 1970s, SoHo had begun its own process of gentrification, with wealthier individuals replacing the up-and-coming artists, and upscale retail stores and restaurants establishing themselves in the place of low-end commercial businesses. Magazine and newspaper articles sounded the gentrification alarm for SoHo and warned about the neighborhood’s demise as a bohemian enclave throughout the decade. As early as 1970, an article for *New York* magazine was titled “SoHo: Artists Bohemia Imperiled.” The author, Peter Hellman wrote, “Now the reason the artists came to SoHo was because it was ignored and cheap. Now it is no longer ignored, and soon it will not be cheap.”⁵⁶

Though the 1971 law on loft residency was intended to preserve SoHo as a neighborhood of artists, legalization seemed to just make the area more attractive to newcomers that were not artists. “Providing space in the city for artists . . . is a subsidy in kind rather than in money – it often has the effect of enhancing property values, and so it becomes a springboard for real estate development.”⁵⁷ Also, “lofts were reasonably

priced living spaces – in fact, comparative bargains – in the expensive and tight housing market of New York.”⁵⁸ Many artists still lived in the area, but many lofts were now solely residential, with no studio space and occupied by non-artists. “A different group of people clamored for loft spaces. SoHo became chic. The fears of the early settlers were beginning to be realized.”⁵⁹ The neighborhood maintained a general ambience of bohemian chic that attracted “. . . prosperous residents who were often more affluent than the pioneer artists.”⁶⁰ In a 1974 article a woman who had recently moved to SoHo with her husband said, “I guess we’re part of the invasion – those non-artists from uptown who want to live downtown.”⁶¹

But the trend of non-artists settling in the area would soon mean that they were no longer living in the bohemian neighborhood that originally appealed to them. As SoHo residential space became more expensive the remaining artists would be those with high incomes or some of the original coopers. While the SAA had been effective in securing legalization or fighting high-rise development they were not effective at keeping out non-artists. As SAA president Charles Leslie said, “Artists aren’t organization people so the association is primarily a crisis group.”⁶² Also, not all artists favored a strict prohibition on non-artists. Sculptor Donald Judd said, “You can’t turn an area into an occupational ghetto... You can’t throw citizens out.”⁶³ That tolerant attitude evinced the fact that not all the artists’ neighbors were artists. By the end of the 1970s even the SAA acknowledged that the neighborhood was changing, “Like all neighborhoods in the city, it will always be changing.”⁶⁴

West Broadway Business Establishments in the 1970s

Table 5. West Broadway Business Establishments – 1975

	West Side Address	East Side Address
Houston Street	482	479
	480	477
	474-478	475
	468-472	473
	464	471
		465-469
	462	463
	460	
	458	457-461
	456	455
	454	453
	452	
	450	451
		445-449
	448	
Prince Street	436-442	435
		433
	430-434	431
		429
	426-428	427
	424	425
		423
	422	421
	418-420	419
	414-416	417
	412	413-415
	408-410	411
		407-409
	Spring Street	402-404
400		401
398		399
396		395-397
392-394		391-393
390		
		387-389
386-388		
382-384		383-385
378-380		379-381
376		375-377
372-374		
Broome Street	370	367
	366-368	363
	362-364	361
	360	359
		357
	354	355
		351-353
		349
		347
	344	345
	342	343
	340	341
	338	339
		337
	Grand Street	336
		327-329
		325
		323
312		
310		311
308		307-309
302	301-305	
Canal Street		

Legalization led to more local residents, and then more tourists. The commercial development of SoHo increased, with new kinds of businesses that served a different clientele -- more affluent local residents and people visiting the area. The 1975 map of West Broadway (table 5) illustrates the shift from the former industrial and commercial companies to new businesses, including the arrival of additional galleries. In general, the map now features a lot more variety, especially north of Broome Street. In the southern reaches of West Broadway, the map is still largely gray (industrial, commercial and automotive) with just one new restaurant, one new clothing store and the Lee Ceramic Gallery representing an art establishment.

In the northern end, the map features much more green, especially the darker green that represents commercial fine art galleries. Art galleries were now a significant presence in SoHo and had become a mainstay of the business establishments along West Broadway. Among the newly arriving businesses galleries were half of the total, and arts-related businesses are now in 26% of the buildings. The arrival of gallerists from uptown was exemplified by the purchase of 420 West Broadway in 1971. The building housed Leo Castelli, Ileana Sonnabend, John Weber, and Andre Emmerich, galleries that represented major modern and contemporary artists. Also, the map now includes some pink (clothing stores) and purple (high-end retail shops) that inhabited the first floors along West Broadway. A few darker blue buildings signaled the arrival of more upscale restaurants in SoHo.

In the numbers for departing and arriving businesses, the arrivals far outnumbered the departures by over two-to-one and the departures were dominated by commercial and industrial businesses. The exodus of such firms from SoHo, and particularly West

Broadway, was now an established trend. Automotive, industrial and commercial businesses occupy only 59% of West Broadway's buildings in 1975, down from 91% only five years earlier.

Table 6. West Broadway Business Establishments - 1980

	West Side Address	East Side Address	
Houston Street	482	479	
	480	477	
		475	
	474-478	473	
	468-472	471	
	464	465-469	
	462	463	
	460	457-461	
	458	455	
	456	453	
	454		
	452		
	450	451	
		445-449	
	448		
	Prince Street	436-442	435
		433	
		431	
430-434		429	
		427	
426-428		425	
424		423	
422		421	
		419	
418-420		417	
414-416		413-415	
		411	
412		407-409	
408-410			
Spring Street		402-404	401
		400	399
	398		
	396	395-397	
	392-394	391-393	
	390	387-389	
	386-388	383-385	
	382-384	379-381	
	378-380	375-377	
	376		
	372-374		
	Broome Street	370	367
		366-368	363
		362-364	361
		360	359
			357
354		355	
		351-353	
		349	
		347	
344		345	
342		343	
340		341	
338		339	
		337	
Grand Street		336	331-335
			327-329
		325	
	312	323	
	310	311	
	308	307-309	
302	301-305		
Canal Street			

The 1980 map of the business establishments along West Broadway (table 6) is even more colorful than that of 1975. Along the southern end of West Broadway, below Broome Street, the buildings have changed from the gray of industrial, commercial and automotive businesses to the brighter colors for new types of enterprises. The number of blue buildings that contained restaurants has doubled and the new restaurants were not diners or neighborhood Italian joints, but upscale dining venues. The increasing pink and purple in the map illustrates the growing number of high-end clothing boutiques and other retail shops. High-end clothing and retail stores (including jewelry stores) suggests the growing affluence of locals and visitors that concentrated not just on art, but also shopping. More buildings are colored green as galleries and art-related enterprises create a “gallery strip” along West Broadway. A number of early galleries are no longer present, but they are replaced by an even greater number of galleries. The Dia Art Foundation, a not-for-profit art institution that exhibited and sponsored contemporary art, is a significant addition to the art scene.

The change in the map’s color represents a further exodus of the industrial and commercial businesses. By 1980 the number of industrial and commercial companies had declined steeply. Combined with automotive, they now occupied only 31% of West Broadway’s buildings. In just ten years, the primary categories of businesses located in 91% of the buildings in 1970 were now present in less than a third along the same stretch of blocks. Those businesses were replaced by arts businesses, galleries, restaurants, clothing, and retail stores that were present in 84% of the buildings. Gallery hopping, dining and shopping were now the dominant activities on West Broadway.

SOHO IN THE 1980s

By the 1980s SoHo had matured into an established neighborhood with a recognized, separate identity like any other neighborhood in Manhattan. Industrial workers who had populated the area by day in previous decades would not have recognized West Broadway and they had no reason to go there, as few industrial concerns still existed. The political conflicts over SoHo's existence and residential status were well in the past. The city formed a new agency to supervise loft conversions, a form of residential space that had progressed from experimental to nearly conventional. The steady economic development of SoHo had ended its industrial age and status as an underground bohemian quarter. In the 1980s SoHo had become a Bohemian-Bourgeois (Bobo) neighborhood. The changes were not welcome by all as "Old time residents . . . lament that the neighborhood has become a tourist attraction, not an art destination."⁶⁵

Though the low rents of the 1960s and early 1970s allowed industry and artists to co-exist in SoHo, rising lease costs in the 1980s were pushing industry out at an accelerated pace. The real competition for manufacturing space was not the artists, but the commercial enterprises that followed the artists: galleries, boutiques, and restaurants. In a table in the Office of the Manhattan Borough President's later report on tourism employment in manufacturing in the area declined from 11,500 to 4,698 persons from 1980-1990, nearly a 60% decline.⁶⁶

SoHo was rapidly changing into a predominantly residential area with a new kind of resident. "Artists who began to concentrate in SoHo lofts toward the end of sixties

were moving out by the beginning of the eighties. Rent increases drove them to Brooklyn, Jersey City, Hoboken and even farther shores.”⁶⁷ A measure of SoHo’s enhanced residential status was its coverage in a regular feature of the weekend Real Estate section of the *New York Times* – “If You’re Thinking of Living in:” In the January 16, 1983 column, Michael Spector wrote about SoHo that the area had come to “signify artsy sophistication and glamour.” Spector also noted the high real estate costs for rentals or coop purchases as “. . . smart shops and trendy restaurants made SoHo a desirable middle class neighborhood.”⁶⁸ Suzanne O’Keefe, the executive director of the New York City Loft Board responded to the article in a letter to the editor clarifying the requirement that one resident needed to be a certified artist by the Department of Cultural Affairs. But that caveat about the legality of residing in SoHo was by then generally ignored. “Thanks to a legal document called “The SoHo letter”, non-artists from the mid-1980s could buy and rent in SoHo.”⁶⁹ The letter was simply a statement that that the individual would be financially responsible for any future legal issues. The more affluent households that entered the area “still cherish its more raucous past – better as history than current reality.”⁷⁰

Margaret Baisley, a lawyer involved in the loft real estate market in SoHo and NoHo from the late 1970s, saw a big change in her clientele in the 1980s. Previously, most of the area’s residents were artists, but after 1982 the new buyers included “. . . doctors, lawyers and dentists.”⁷¹ Those without artist certification could use an artist with certification as a front. “For the right price, some artists offered up their certificates to loft buyers.”⁷² The artist would change the address on their certification to match the loft buyer’s residence.

SoHo was a fashionable destination neighborhood for city residents and foreign tourists. The narrow streets and sidewalks were clogged with foot traffic, especially on the weekends. SoHo tourists in the 1970s were drawn by galleries, but in the 1980s shopping and dining were additional attractions for visitors. In 1983 Grace Glueck's article, "Some Choice Spots for a Gallery-Hopping Tour of SoHo" (October 16, 1981) recommended restaurants as well as galleries. Other *New York Times* articles covered changing trends in SoHo's retail shops: furniture and housewares stores in the mid-1980s and cosmetic shops and spas in the late 1980s. Artists complained about the commercialization of SoHo that was transforming and, in their view, deforming the area, saying it would result in "a cheapening and vulgarization of the social milieu . . . [and] undermine the artistic vitality of SoHo."⁷³

Government Oversight

Loft living had been legalized nearly a decade earlier, but the city was still concerned about the progress of loft buildings across the city meeting building codes encompassed in Article 7-C of the state's Multiple Dwelling Law, designed specifically for commercial and manufacturing buildings converted to residential use. In 1980 the City Planning Commission drafted recommendations about the ongoing loft conversions titled "The Manhattan Loft Rezoning Proposal." The Commission was grappling with where to legalize loft conversions and how to protect manufacturing zones and jobs. In 1981 the City Planning Commission finally agreed on zoning changes to protect the garment, meatpacking, and printing industries while allowing loft conversions in other

neighborhoods. The 1981 rulings did slow down the rate of conversions in the Commission's designated areas of preservation.

The City Council established the New York City Loft Board in 1982, a successor to the Mayor's Office for Loft Enforcement. The Mayor's Office for Loft Enforcement had been headed by Carl Weisbrod who commented on the newer loft conversions, ". . . the nature of loft development had changed from a grass-roots movement by artists who bought or rented 'raw space' to one in which developers sold or rented fully finished loft apartments to young professionals."⁷⁴ The newly established New York City Loft Board was tasked with overseeing the process of bringing loft buildings that housed residential tenants, whether renters or owners, into compliance so the building could gain a residential Certificate of Occupancy. The program established deadlines, penalties, and explicit guidance for the cost allocation between landlords and residents for the necessary improvements, but court challenges slowed enforcement until the late 1980s. Also, the Loft Board was the agency designated to mediate any complaints and conflicts over rent increases or evictions and it oversaw rent stabilization for relevant tenants. In 1987 the Loft Board recognized that many SoHo residents, especially coop owners, were not artists. Rather than attempting to evict those residents, the city offered a one-time amnesty that grandfathered in all current residents. A spokeswoman for the Department of Cultural Affairs told the *New York Times*, "We recognized the fact that we could not embark on a wholesale eviction of those people."⁷⁵

West Broadway Business Establishments in the 1980s

Table 7. West Broadway Business Establishments - 1990

	West Side Address	East Side Address
Houston Street	482	
	480	479
	474-478	477
		475
		473
	468-472	471
		465-469
	464	463
	462	
	460	457-461
	458	
	456	455
	454	453
	452	
	450	451
	445-449	
448		
Prince Street	436-442	435
		433
	430-434	431
		429
	426-428	427
	424	425
	422	423
		421
	418-420	419
		417
	414-416	413-415
	412	411
	408-410	407-409
Spring Street	402-404	
	400	401
	398	399
	396	395-397
	392-394	
	390	391-393
	386-388	387-389
	382-384	383-385
	378-380	379-381
	376	375-377
372-374		
Broome Street	370	367
	366-368	363
	362-364	361
	360	359
		357
	354	355
		351-353
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		345
	344	
	342	343
	340	341
	338	339
		337
Grand Street	336	331-335
		327-329
		325
	312	323
	310	311
	308	307-309
302	301-305	
Canal Street		

SoHo's development from emerging artist neighborhood to established residential area was mirrored by shifts in the business establishments located along West Broadway, its main thoroughfare. The residents were no longer mostly artists, but included an affluent group of non-artist professionals that wanted more than art galleries to patronize. West Broadway supplied these new locals and visitors from outside the neighborhood with new attractions. The street still had many galleries, but throughout the 1980s it became a destination for shopping and dining as well.

The 1990s map of West Broadway (table 7) illustrates the near disappearance of industrial and commercial businesses along West Broadway. In 1965 automotive, industrial, and commercial concerns occupied 61 buildings along West Broadway (90%), and in 1990 they existed at only 7 commercially occupied sites (less than 10%). The one remaining industrial concern, Cella's Confections (near Grand Street) was a long-standing business in the neighborhood. Cella's had moved into its building by 1970. There were a few scattered commercial businesses still on West Broadway, but the transformation of the street was nearly complete.

After earlier expansion the number of buildings with art-related establishments and restaurants had stabilized. The major growth in businesses by buildings was clothing and retail. North of Prince Street, the green of galleries and art-related enterprises and even the blue of restaurants is now replaced by the pink of high-end clothing and purple of high-end retail. Through the 1980s clothing boutiques had increased their occupancy rate of commercially occupied buildings to 36% of West Broadway store fronts, and retail stores were now located in 25% of the buildings.

Between Spring Street and Prince Street, a new building has been constructed at 430-434 West Broadway, replacing three brick apartment buildings that were demolished in 1986. The new building is modern in design (glass, granite and stainless steel) and the developers have rented the space to multiple stores, mostly high-end retail and clothing shops. Residents and local business owners complain that the new building is not in keeping with local architecture and represents a vertical strip mall on West Broadway. A building at 375-377 West Broadway, The SoHo Emporium, draws the same criticism about its approach to retailing by leasing space to multiple small retail shops. In an August 3, 1988 article for the *New York Times*, Shawn G. Kennedy observes a disturbing trend in the types of businesses that line West Broadway, “Over the years there has been homogenization . . . of the retail base along West Broadway.”

The list of arriving and departing businesses is long, a measure of the turnover of businesses. A notable loss was St. Alphonsus Liguori, a Romanesque style Catholic Church built 1870-1872 and the only religious institution on West Broadway. In 1980 the church settled into an underground stream, was declared structurally unsound, and was razed in 1981. Among the significant arrivals was SoHotel, the first hotel along West Broadway, and real estate businesses, such as Halstead Property. Among the clothing boutiques SoHo had a new contingent of designer shops that were outposts of established uptown or European stores. The retail shops now included many interior design stores, West Broadway’s first major bookstore, Rizzoli, an emporium known for art books, and its first hair salon, John Dellaria. The new retail stores, real estate brokerage, and hair salon, attest to SoHo’s residential nature and growing population.

SOHO IN THE 1990s

In the last decade of the 20th century, SoHo still had a chic, trendy, and vaguely arty ambience, but underneath the surface the neighborhood had been fully transformed. To long-standing local residents the area appeared to be more of a tourist destination and urban shopping mall and less of an avant-garde arts district, its earlier incarnation. “. . . the distinctive cultural meaning the neighborhood derived from the use of space for either manufacturing or art – was overwhelmed by the homogenizing force of new chain stores and multimillion dollar lofts.”⁷⁶ The dramatic climb in real estate values led artist and other early residents to cash out of their lofts and move on. SoHo could now be described by Bernstein and Shapiro’s chapter heading in their book on 80 Wooster Street, ‘Less Art – More Real Estate’. New artists never considered moving into SoHo, but set their sights on Brooklyn for affordable rents and the bohemian atmosphere SoHo had once offered. Commercial lease rates were bid higher by expensive restaurants and high-end clothing and other retail establishments that dominated the storefronts. Rising rents finally managed to drive out the galleries that decamped to the western edge of Chelsea. In SoHo, “. . . high priced art gave way to high priced makeup.”⁷⁷

The onslaught of tourists to the area and the notion that visitors were no longer coming to view art was not just perception. The Office of the Manhattan Borough President, a political post held by Ruth W. Messinger, produced a report in 1994, “A Report on Tourism in SoHo.” Locals may not have appreciated the crowding of their streets by visitors, but the city saw tourism in SoHo as an economic boon for the city’s economy. On-the-street surveys of tourists formed the basis of the report, and one of the

purposes of the report was to “assist the SoHo Tourism Council in developing an appropriate tourism development strategy.”⁷⁸ The survey uncovered a shift in the reason that people visited the area. The report states, “That both surveys also report shopping as popular activity indicates SoHo’s development from an area known solely for the arts to one where retail plays an increasingly important role.”⁷⁹

Nonetheless, potential residents still viewed the area as having some bohemian cachet. However, while landmarking preserved the cast iron buildings from demolition, it also limited the supply of housing in SoHo. As more people tried to buy lofts, there was not much housing inventory to satisfy the demand and prices were pushed higher. Based on data from Miller Samuel Inc., Manhattan real estate appraisers, the cost for a 2500 square foot loft in SoHo was \$670,000 in 1990. By 2000 prices had doubled, and the same space now sold for \$1,380,000.⁸⁰ Such high prices benefited those who owned their coops, but also limited living in SoHo to only the wealthy. The artists that remained were either well established and successful or a “residue of aging coopers, their studios rather than their careers having become their wealth.”⁸¹ As Kostelanetz said about himself and remaining coop neighbors in his building in 2003, “Every one of us is a paper millionaire, at least for the value of our lofts, even if our incomes remain negligible.”⁸²

SoHo Galleries Move to Chelsea

Rising real estate prices also had an impact on the galleries in SoHo. The 1990s was the start of galleries’ retreat from the high rents of SoHo to cheaper space in Chelsea, a neighborhood on Manhattan’s west side. In the 1970s galleries had spread quickly throughout SoHo as it became New York’s hub of contemporary art exhibition. In the latter half of the 1990s the same phenomenon occurred, but this time in Chelsea. As

Bernstein and Shapiro note in their book, “SoHo’s decline as an art center was as rapid as its ascent.”⁸³ Though some galleries owned their space, the majority were renters. At some point galleries could not compete with other commercial enterprises on the ground floor -- high-end stores and expensive restaurants. Gallery buildings that included upper-floor galleries lost their “anchor tenant” when the storefront gallery was displaced and soon they felt pressure to move.

The new Chelsea Gallery District where the galleries moved to was located in an area west of 10th Avenue to the river from 16th Street to 30th Street. Real estate costs were lower, the spaces were even bigger than the lofts of SoHo, and galleries did not have the competition of other retail usage. Also, the Chelsea spaces had garage door fronts with full truck access and no interior columns, accommodating even larger contemporary art installations. After their experience with rising lease rates in SoHo galleries locating in Chelsea bought their space in the area. The Dia Art Foundation was one of the first art institutions of SoHo to open an outlet in Chelsea, in 1987, and soon other SoHo gallerists (Paula Cooper, Mary Boone and Larry Gagosian) arrived. The migration started slowly as SoHo galleries waited to see if the Chelsea galleries could draw clients, but “The initial jump to Chelsea from SoHo demonstrated that ‘it could be done’.”⁸⁴

A study by Molotch and Treskon proposed that the economics underlying the departure was more nuanced than simply higher rents. The emigration out of SoHo was influenced also by the downturn in the art market in the early 1990s, which in turn determined the profitability and affordability of SoHo spaces. If art prices had accelerated at the same rate as rents, galleries could still have been profitable. But squeezed at both ends in the 1990s – higher rental costs combined with a downturn in art prices – galleries

vacated the increasingly expensive storefronts and lofts of SoHo, moving to the cheaper spaces of Chelsea. Molotch and Treskon, using the listings in *Art in America Annual Guide to Galleries, Museums, Artists*, quantified the movement of art galleries from SoHo to Chelsea beginning in 1990 (table 8).

Table 8. Galleries in SoHo and Chelsea⁸⁵

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007
Chelsea	16	12	144	257	303
SoHo	275	286	192	133	104

Source: *Art in America Annual Guide to Galleries, Museums, Artists*

By the end of the decade, many of the artists in SoHo were gone and so were many of the galleries. SoHo had become “a neighborhood with some galleries . . . [but] no longer a gallery neighborhood.”⁸⁶ The transition of SoHo to a shopping destination rather than a gallery-hopping locale was described by Ronald Feldman, a gallery owner in 1996, “. . . if one night all the galleries in SoHo moved out in unison . . . most of the people who come to SoHo now would not even know they had gone.”⁸⁷ At the close of the 1990s, with declining numbers of artists and galleries, SoHo was losing any legitimate claim to the art capital of New York, or even an arts neighborhood.

West Broadway Business Establishments in the 1990s

Table 9. West Broadway Business Establishments – 2000

	West Side Address	East Side Address	
Houston Street	482	479	
	480	477	
	474-478	475	
	468-472	473	
	464	471	
	462	465-469	
	460	463	
	458	457-461	
	456	453	
	454	451	
	452	445-449	
	450		
	448		
	Prince Street	436-442	435
430-434		433	
426-428		431	
424		429	
422		427	
		425	
		423	
		421	
418-420		419	
414-416		417	
412		413-415	
408-410		411	
		407-409	
Spring Street		402-404	
	400	401	
	398	399	
	396	395-397	
	392-394	391-393	
	390	387-389	
	386-388		
	382-384	383-385	
	378-380	379-381	
	376		
	372-374	375-377	
	Broome Street	370	367
		366-368	363
362-364		361	
360		359	
354		357	
		355	
		351-353	
		349	
		347	
344		345	
342		343	
340		341	
338		339	
		337	
Grand Street	336	331-335	
		327-329	
		325	
	312	323	
	310	311	
	308	307-309	
302	301-305		
Canal Street			

Beginning in the 1970s SoHo had drawn visitors to the area, but in the 1990s there were even more tourists. Local residents regularly complained about the crowds that thronged the sidewalks, and no longer just on weekends. In the 1970s visitors were lured by the art scene, but by the 1990s SoHo had many more clothing, jewelry, and design stores along every street. People from the area disparaged the evolution of SoHo from arts district to outdoor mall.

The 2000 map of West Broadway's business establishments (table 9) is still brightly colored, but the hues have changed from 1990. North of Prince Street, the high-end retail stores (lavender) have displaced a number of the clothing boutiques. From Spring Street to Prince Street, clothing stores (pink) now predominate. More restaurants (blue) were established along West Broadway, especially at the southern end between Broome Street and Grand Street. High-end retail stores were the most effective competition for commercial space on West Broadway. Since 1990 they had increased their occupancy from eighteen to twenty-six buildings, 34% of West Broadway's commercial building sites. The retail businesses now include more cosmetic stores (e.g. Origins, Aveda), salons and a new store for cigars, a retro-style fad of the 1990s, owned by Ivan Karp. Among the design and furniture shops, Smith & Hawken, a chain of stores specializing in outdoor furniture and gardening, had arrived. As Brooks says in his book, *Bobos in Paradise*, Smith & Hawken was the kind of "upscale gardening store where you can buy a faux-authentic trowel for \$35.99."⁸⁸ On lower West Broadway SoHo had gained a major new hotel near Canal Street on the site of what had been St. Alphonsus Liguori church. Other new businesses also moved in: internet and web-related companies, the dotcoms of the late 1990s.

On the map the number of buildings housing a commercial fine arts gallery (green) had hardly changed since 1990, a deceptive indicator that the galleries on West Broadway and throughout SoHo were just as prevalent as ten years earlier. However, some galleries, although still listed in the telephone directories, had either closed or moved to Chelsea. At 418-420 West Broadway, Leo Castelli's and Ileana Sonnabend's galleries are still listed, but Castelli's gallery had closed in 1999 after his death and the Sonnabend Gallery moved to Chelsea in 2000. A tally of the directory listings for commercial fine art galleries along West Broadway showed a more than 40% decline in the number of galleries from 1990-2000, substantiating the relocation of galleries from SoHo to Chelsea.

CONCLUSION

SoHo experienced a complete metamorphosis from the 1960s through the end of the 20th century. In its bohemian era of the 1960s-1970s, the neighborhood was home to artists and other early settlers that converted industrial lofts into studios and living spaces. In the 1980s SoHo became an increasingly wealthy residential neighborhood. More affluent professionals whose role in the art world was limited to spectator replaced the initial low-income residents engaged in the creation of art. The transition from Boho to Bobo happened in less than twenty years. During the same period SoHo's former downscale industrial and commercial enterprises gave way to upscale business establishments and residential lofts. Only the cast iron buildings survived the successive phases of SoHo's development.

The businesses along West Broadway illustrate the marked change in the general character of the neighborhood. Table 10 displays the map of the businesses along West Broadway in 1965 and 2000. The map on the left (1965) is almost completely gray (industrial, commercial and automotive) with just a few delis, diners and restaurants, and one church. On the right, the map is brightly colored, with only four buildings continuing to house any of the kinds of businesses that were prevalent on the street thirty-five years before. By 2000, West Broadway is crowded with expensive restaurants, high-end retail stores, designer clothing boutiques, a major hotel, and some remaining contemporary art galleries.

The transformation of SoHo from declining industrial district to prosperous neighborhood can be viewed as the success story of an area that barely evaded urban renewal and managed to preserve its characteristic and historic architecture. The early rehabilitation of the area was a grassroots effort of urban pioneers who organized and cooperated with political and advocacy groups to subvert the development plans of major civic organizations and business interests. The neighborhood was not bulldozed to make way for high-rise housing or an Expressway, and the cast iron structures have been preserved. The streets and buildings are no longer dingy and deserted, but vibrant with people and thriving businesses. SoHo is known globally through design magazines and movies as a district of fashion and sophistication with enviable living spaces and chic retailers. For residents that arrived in recent years and tourists to the area the continual upgrading has been seen as constant improvement.

But others, particularly the pioneering residents, have seen the same transfiguration as a disappointment or betrayal of the neighborhood and residents. The early settlers felt an attachment and ownership of the neighborhood based on the “ . . . hardships encountered and the sweat labor expended in converting raw loft spaces into usable places in which to live and work imbued these spaces with special significance for their occupants.”⁸⁹ In their view the unplanned transition from industrial district to bohemian arts enclave was a natural evolution. But the subsequent gentrification was neither their expectation nor intention when they first moved to SoHo. Not only had artists settled the area, but the city had specifically designated the area for artists when they legalized loft living in 1971, and yet there remained fewer and fewer working artists as time moved on. To early residents, SoHo typifies city neighborhoods

that have been "upscaled, redeveloped and homogenized to the point of losing their distinctive identity."⁹⁰ Outsiders may dismiss their complaints as simply nostalgia for "the old neighborhood" and its days as urban art colony. But to long-time residents, the mallification of SoHo and the departure of artists and galleries has culminated in a faux-art district, not an authentic neighborhood. The grit and grime of SoHo's early days are gone, but the price of its rejuvenation has been the loss of its identity as New York's first and foremost arts community.

NOTES

¹ Bobo is a term popularized by David Brooks in his book, *Bobos in Paradise*, describing a hybrid culture of bohemian and bourgeois sensibilities - counterculture attitudes fused to urban professional ambitions.

² Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: Rise and Fall of an Artist's Colony* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 39.

³ James R. Hudson, "Pioneer Artists and Middle Class Settlers: Lifestyle Variables and Neighborhood Succession," *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* Vol. 9, No. 3 (1988): 251.

⁴ Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: Rise and Fall of an Artist's Colony* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 32.

⁵ City of New York, Landmarks Preservation Commission, Parks Recreation and Cultural Affairs Administration. "SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report." 1973, iii.

⁶ City of New York, Landmarks Preservation Commission, "SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension Designation Report." 2010, 1.

⁷ Margot Gayle and Edmund V. Gillon, Jr., *Cast-Iron Architecture in New York*. (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1974), iv.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ii.

⁹ City of New York, Landmarks Preservation Commission, Parks Recreation and Cultural Affairs Administration. "SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report." 1973, 9.

¹⁰ Norval White and Elliott Willensky with Fran Leadon, *AIA Guide to New York City* (New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1978), 45.

¹¹ "Lots of History at Nadler Fundraiser in SoHo." SoHo Alliance. Volume 76, No.44, 3/28-4/3/2007. Accessed January 28, 2011. www.sohoalliance.org/news_archives.html.

¹² James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 37.

¹³ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 10.

¹⁴ City of New York, Landmarks Preservation Commission, Parks Recreation and Cultural Affairs Administration. "SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report." 1973, iii.

¹⁵ City of New York, Landmarks Preservation Commission, "SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension Designation Report." 2010, 1.

¹⁶ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 2.

¹⁷ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 79.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Thierry J. Noyelle and Thomas M. Stanback, Jr., *The Economic Transformation of American Cities* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld (division of Littlefield, Adams & Company, 1983), 15.

²⁰ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 4.

²¹ Thierry J. Noyelle and Thomas M. Stanback, Jr., *The Economic Transformation of American Cities* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld (division of Littlefield, Adams & Company, 1983), 20.

²² James W. Hughes and George Sternlieb, *Post Industrial America: Metropolitan Decline & Inter-Regional Job Shift* (New Brunswick, NJ: The Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University 1975), 2.

²³ Jim Stratton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* (New York, NY: Urizen Books, 1977), 15.

²⁴ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 132-133.

²⁵ Chester A. Rapkin, "The South Houston Industrial Area." *City Planning Commission – Department of City Planning*, February (1963), 282.

²⁶ Ibid., 283.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 123.

²⁹ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 137.

³⁰ Jim Stratton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* (New York, NY: Urizen Books, 1977), 7.

³¹ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), xii.

³² Stephen Petrus, "From Gritty to Chic: The Transformation of New York City's SoHo 1962-1976," *SoHo Alliance*. Accessed January 17, 2010. www.sohoalliance.org, 11.

³³ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 88.

³⁴ Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), 56.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Jim Stratton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* (New York, NY: Urizen Books, 1977), 31.

³⁷ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 1.

³⁸ Jim Stratton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* (New York, NY: Urizen Books, 1977), 16.

³⁹ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 60.

⁴⁰ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 161.

⁴¹ Jim Stratton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* (New York, NY: Urizen Books, 1977), 41.

⁴² Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 166.

⁴³ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁴ Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), 137.

⁴⁵ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 126.

⁴⁶ Stephen Petrus, "From Gritty to Chic: The Transformation of New York City's SoHo 1962-1976," *SoHo Alliance*, Accessed January 17, 2010. www.sohoalliance.org, 20.

⁴⁷ Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 150.

⁴⁸ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 177.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁵⁰ Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), 141.

⁵¹ Jim Stratton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* (New York, NY: Urizen Books, 1977), 37.

⁵² Jim Stratton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* (New York, NY: Urizen Books, 1977), 40.

⁵³ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁵ Carter Ratcliff, "SoHo: Disneyland of the Aesthete?" *New York Affairs* Vol. 4, No. 4 (1978): 71.

⁵⁶ Peter Hellman, "SoHo: Artists Bohemia Imperiled." *New York Magazine*, August 24, 1970, 46.

⁵⁷ Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 111.

⁵⁸ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 95.

⁵⁹ Bernstein, Roslyn and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo*. Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010, 199.

⁶⁰ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 94.

⁶¹ Paul Gardner, "SoHo: Brave New Bohemia," *Art News*, April 1974, 57.

⁶² Stephen Petrus, "From Gritty to Chic: The Transformation of New York City's SoHo 1962-1976," *SoHo Alliance*. Accessed January 17, 2011. www.sohoalliance.org, 17.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁴ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 228.

⁶⁵ Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), xi.

⁶⁶ Office of the Manhattan Borough President and the SoHo Tourism Council. "A Report on Tourism in SoHo." May 1994, 17.

⁶⁷ Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 4.

⁶⁸ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 95.

⁶⁹ Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: Rise and Fall of an Artist's Colony* (New York, NY: Rutledge, 2003), 224.

⁷⁰ James R. Hudson, "Pioneer Artists and Middle Class Settlers: Lifestyle Variables and Neighborhood Succession." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* Vol. 9, No. 3 (1988): 262.

⁷¹ Roslyn Bernstein, Roslyn and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), 219.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 92.

⁷⁴ Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), 221.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁷⁶ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 239.

⁷⁷ Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo*. (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), 245.

⁷⁸ Office of the Manhattan Borough President and the SoHo Tourism Council. "A Report on Tourism in SoHo." May 1994, 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁰ "Aggregate Data Search Engine." Miller Samuel Inc. Real Estate Appraisers & Consultants. Accessed April 12, 2011. <https://aggegate-data.MillersSamuel.com>,

⁸¹ Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 5.

⁸² Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: Rise and Fall of an Artist's Colony* (New York, NY: Rutledge, 2003), 36.

⁸³ Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), 245.

⁸⁴ Molotch, Harvey and Mark Treskon. "Changing Art: SoHo, Chelsea and the Dynamic Geography of Galleries in New York City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol. 33 Issue 2 (2009): 529.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 524.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 529.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise; The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2000), 9.

⁸⁹ James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 82.

⁹⁰ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010). xi.

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