



Art attack pains SoHo realty sellers

By JENNIFER GOULD KEIL

Real-estate deals in SoHo and NoHo could come to a standstill unless a decades-old -- but only recently enforced -- city law is overturned, say worried residents.

The Artists-in-Residence law says that about 200 buildings that were converted from commercial to residential use are only for "artists" as defined by the city's Department of Cultural Affairs.

Artists are "certified" by a department committee that determines if they're actively working in painting, sculpting, choreography, music or other artistic endeavors.

But not every artist is able to afford the luxury homes, and it could hurt potential sellers -- such as Jon Bon Jovi, who quietly put his penthouse on the market and is asking more than \$30 million.

The city has already denied certificates of occupancy to 10 buildings in the area -- including Bon Jovi's at 158 Mercer St., said Margaret Baisley, a real-estate lawyer.

Apartment buildings put up in the past few years are exempt from the "artists-only" rule, Baisley said.

The SoHo/NoHo Action Committee will meet tonight at St. Anthony's Church to push to make SoHo safe for artful dodgers.

It was formed "in response to the increased enforcement of the archaic AIR statute," Baisley said.

A broker added, "Ninety percent of the people here are living illegally."