



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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Delores Rubin
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

April 14, 2016

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building, 9th Floor
One Centre Street, New York, NY 10007

Re: 440 West 20th Street

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

On the recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee, Manhattan Community Board No. 4 (CB4), at its regularly scheduled meeting on April 6, 2016, voted, by a vote of 37 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote, to recommend denial of an application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for alterations to 440 West 20th Street in the Chelsea Historic District unless certain conditions are met. These conditions are that the over-sized bulkhead is replaced with an open staircase and the brick rear parapet is replaced with a more suitable wall.

Background

440 West 20th Street is a four-story residential building with a cellar located across the street from the General Theological Seminary in the heart of the Chelsea Historic District. The owner proposes to make the following changes to the building:

- Extend the rear façade 18 inches into the rear yard from the cellar to the third floor, rebuilding it with a brick façade;
- Restore the cornice and brick on the fourth floor to their original condition; and
- Add a fifth floor covering approximately half the area of the lower floors, a slanted bulkhead to provide access to a rear deck on the roof of the fifth floor and a solid brick wall facing the block's interior green "doughnut."

Analysis and Recommendations

The Board notes that the proposed alterations increase the bulk of the building significantly. The addition is artfully designed not to be visible from West 20th Street, and minimally from other vantage points, and thus to conform to LPC requirements. It is, however, quite visible from other houses bordering the block's interior. The bulkhead for an interior stair to access the deck on the roof of the proposed fifth floor and a 5'3" solid brick parapet on the deck's south side create essentially a sixth floor on the block's interior, blocking light and air to neighboring buildings and rear yards.

We believe that a relatively unobtrusive open staircase to access the roof deck would be greatly preferable to the enclosed bulkhead. We also believe that a transparent fence with planters in place of the brick parapet would suffice for privacy and be far less intrusive.

CB4 therefore recommends denial of this application unless the over-sized bulkhead is replaced with an open staircase and the brick rear parapet is replaced with a more suitable wall. It is our understanding that the architect has redesigned the parapet wall and we look forward to seeing any additional revised drawings addressing our concerns.

Sincerely,



Delores Rubin
MCB4 Chair



John Lee Compton, Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee



Betty Mackintosh, Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Gale A. Brewer
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council