



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

February 4, 2010

Hon. Robert B. Tierney
Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building, Ninth floor
One Center Street
New York, New York 10007

**Re: 331 West 22nd Street
Chelsea Historic District**

Dear Chair Tierney:

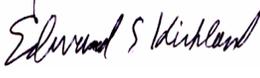
Manhattan Community Board Four is responding to the application to cure violations at the row house at 331 West 22nd Street in the Chelsea Historic District. On the basis of the presentation at the meeting of its Landmarks Committee on January 20 it believes that most of the relatively minor violations can be easily worked out by working with staff to ensure a fully appropriate application.

The Board commends the applicants on the fine restoration of the seriously deteriorated row house at 331 West 22nd Street, in particular the stoop, and on their clear intentions to follow the spirit and letter of the Landmarks Law. Unfortunately, in following the largely valid principle of seeking precedents for the restoration in nearby buildings in the handsome and largely restored row, the applicants appear to have installed some features that were not fully appropriate but were based on nearby features that were either grandfathered or recently installed without proper permits.

Although the presenter to the Landmarks Committee seemed not to be completely certain of the exact features found inappropriate, the window guards installed on the outside of the second and third floor windows to protect children in these bedrooms were clearly among them. Since these features have no historic precedent but can be replaced by properly installed plain window guards, on the interior if legally possible, a remedy seems easy. While we are doubtful of the heavy and elaborate guards at the parlor floor, which are apparently based on those at a row house a few doors west, the issues can be worked out as well if this feature should not be found appropriate. The Board believes that the unhistorically elaborate and conspicuous guards under the stoop and at the recreated basement window should definitely be modified, or replaced if necessary, to reflect the simpler historic precedents visible on many row houses nearby and to reduce conflict in the ornamental scheme of the façade.

The Board has continued concerns about the areaways of row houses in the Chelsea Historic District. Clement Clarke Moore implicitly and sometimes explicitly called for plantings in the setbacks of houses on side streets in his detailed directions for building on the lots he sold. In this application the boards and a site visit show handsome but new stone paving covering the full areaway. Although a few other areaways in the row are fully paved, most show at least some planting reflecting the historic condition, usually located close to the sidewalk. We believe the Commission should take into account the significant historic feature of plantings along the east-west streets of the Chelsea Historic District in evaluating this and similar applications and require appropriate planting, especially near the sidewalk on the parts of the areaway not required for access under the stoop and possibly for minor storage nearby. Such planting reinforces the historic character of Chelsea and may have as well the advantage of partially masking trashcans and other unhistoric "stuff" that experience has shown is likely to be frequently placed in areaways and sometimes linger there for long periods.

Sincerely,

		
<p>John Weis Chair Manhattan Community Board 4</p>	<p>Edward S. Kirkland Co-Chair Landmarks Committee</p>	<p>John D. Lamb Co-Chair Landmarks Committee</p>

cc: Applicant
Ms. Sarah Carroll, Landmarks Preservation Commission