

June 24, 2002

Hon. Sherida Paulsen
Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
1 Center Street, Ninth Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Re: 187 Ninth Avenue

Dear Chair Paulsen:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 is writing to oppose the application for legalization of the current rear-yard addition at 187 Ninth Avenue in the Chelsea Historic District.

The mid-nineteenth century row of two-story wooden buildings, of which this is a part, forms one of the most distinctive features of Chelsea. While originally they must have been considered little more than “taxpayers” inconsistent with Clement Clarke Moore’s plans for a genteel suburb, the years have given them a charm and antiquity that has not merely made them dear to the community but even given them real significance and rarity—how many wooden buildings or nineteenth-century taxpayers survive in Manhattan? These qualities depend on carefully maintenance of the buildings’ character and integrity, and it is this integrity that is threatened by this application.

The rear yard of the brick building on the northwest corner of 21st Street and Ninth Avenue and just south of the row of wooden buildings has long been separated from the street by a wooden fence a little over six feet high topped with a questionably legal razor-wire fence with vines growing over it. The rear surfaces of these buildings are partially visible from 21st Street at this point: a large part is visible from the south sidewalk in all seasons, with quite a clear view in the leafless ones; the north side affords some view in leafless periods. The recent changes are visible. The roofline of a deep one-story extension at 187 Ninth Avenue can be seen from the south side of the street even in summer. Well above it and close to the roof of the building itself is a large, partially blue metal object as well as a large pipe leading down from it into the extension, presumably part of a ventilating system for the restaurant proposed for the premises in question. This object dominates the view of the row of buildings at this point from the south sidewalk in all seasons and is visible from the edge of the north sidewalk. The ugliness and incongruity of this foreign object severely diminishes the character of these buildings and the

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nearby section of the Historic District. Its construction was inconsistent with the issuance of a Certificate of No Effect.

We understand that there has been controversy about a legal partial extension, as well as some other issues not strictly relevant to the jurisdiction of this Commission, such as the use of the entirety of this wood-frame building for a restaurant; but the Board has not sufficient information to comment on these issues. We can note that the Board has had occasion to write officially to dispute assertions made by the applicant to the State Liquor Authority about the position of a Board committee in the matter of a liquor license for the proposed restaurant on the premises.

In the matter before this Commission at 187 Ninth Avenue this Board believes that the extension as built, and in particular the visible portion of the ventilating equipment, is inappropriate and the application for legalization should be denied.

Sincerely,



Simone Sindin
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4

Edward S. Kirkland
Chair
Landmarks Sub-Committee

cc: Hon. Michael Bloomberg, Mayor
Hon. C. Virginia Fields, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Thomas Duane, State Senator
Hon. Richard Gottfried, State Assemblymember
Hon. Christine Quinn, City Councilmember
Chris Morelli
Steven Shore