

March 4, 2004

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan
Chair, Board of Standards and Appeals
40 Rector Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Variance for bulk at 343 West 16th Street

Dear Ms. Srinivasan:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4, at its regular meeting on March 3, 2004, voted 33 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstaining, 0 present but not eligible to vote, that it had no objection to the proposed bulk variance at 343 West 16th Street.

Nevertheless the Board has concerns about certain aspects of the project that were discussed at the meetings of the Chelsea Preservation and Planning Committee on December 15, 2003 and February 16, 2004, at which the applicant made presentations. The present zoning of the block that allows residential development at an appropriate contextual bulk is part of a larger rezoning that followed on an initiative of the Board, and the Board has a special interest in maintaining its integrity.

In general the three items on the objection sheet for which variance is sought are minor, although the cumulative variance from zoning requirements would have some impact on light and air. Board 4 therefore asks that the Board of Standards and Appeals take into account these comments on the three parts of the variance in evaluating this application:

1. Non-compliance with the FAR proposed (4.21 proposed instead of the legal maximum of 4.0).

While this is not a major concern, here as in the third DOB objection the Board requests that the Board of Standards and Appeal carefully evaluate whether this allowance is required for the economic feasibility of the project. While the height of the proposed building and streetwall on 16th Street are complying, the increase beyond the legal bulk on the merged lot will lead to some additional reduction of light and air on this dark street shadowed by the huge former Port Authority Building,

2. Non-compliance with the legal number of dwelling units on the lot.

Since any new building will lead to an increase in residential units above the legal limit on the merged lot and the proposed increase will be minimal, the Board has no objection to this allowance.

3. Non-compliance with the rear yard requirement (57 feet proposed instead of the legal minimum of 60 feet).

Again the Board requests careful evaluation of the economic necessity of this allowance. Light and air are at a premium in the interior of this block because of the narrow rear yards between old tenements and other older buildings, so that any encroachment on the required rear yard for this project, even if it remains significantly larger than most of those in the block, will reduce a valuable amenity.

Board 4 thanks the applicant for responding to our concerns about the proposed façade on 16th Street and for modifying the design to ensure fuller compliance with the streetwall requirements of the contextual zoning.

Sincerely,



Walter Mankoff

Chair

Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Lee Compton

Co-Chair

Chelsea Preservation & Planning Committee



Edward S. Kirkland

Co-Chair

Chelsea Preservation & Planning Committee

cc: Elected Officials
Laura Osorio, DOB