



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**COREY JOHNSON**  
Chair

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

April 9, 2012

Hon. Robert B Tierney  
Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building, 9<sup>th</sup> floor  
One Centre Street  
New York, New York 10007

**Re: 222 West 23rd Street, The Chelsea Hotel**  
**Proposed Alterations to Storefront, Windows, Entry Canopy, Signage**  
**Proposed rooftop additions**

Dear Chair Tierney:

At the April 4, 2012, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) meeting, architect Eugene Kaufman presented the proposed renovations for the Chelsea Hotel, a historic New York City landmark building. Built between 1883 and 1885, the Queen Anne Revival and Victorian Gothic twelve-story red brick building, with its distinctive delicate flower-ornamented iron balconies on the façade, was one of the City's first private cooperative apartment houses.

CB4 voted to recommend **approval** for some proposed renovations, to recommend **approval with conditions** for another proposed renovation, and to request more information on two other proposed recommendations. The Board voted to recommend **denial** for the proposed rooftop addition.

The proposed work includes:

- Replacement of existing windows on the north (street) façade with new wood and glass windows matching the historical profiles;
- Replacement of existing windows on the south (rear) façade with new aluminum and glass windows;
- Replacement of the existing storefront on the north (street) façade with new aluminum and glass storefront per the recently installed, Landmarks Preservation Commission-approved storefront at the proposed donut shop;
- Restoration and refurbishment of the Hotel Chelsea sign;
- Removal and replication of the existing hotel canopy;
- Addition of freestanding planter box dividers at north (street) façade balconies;
- Addition of a greenhouse structure attached to the southeast corner of the building;

- A 3,800 square foot commercial-use roof top addition on the north side, which abuts windows, doors, and open space of the existing occupied roof level apartments;
- Installation of two (2) new elevators in the building, one of which will provide ADA access to all floors and the other will provide access to the proposed roof addition; and,
- Addition of cooling tower and relocated water tanks on a new platform above the eastern side of the roof.

CB4 recommends **approval** of the following:

1. Replacement of the existing windows on the north (street) façade with new windows in the existing masonry openings. Windows are to be wood and insulated glass with frames and sashes to match historic profiles, and painted in the original historic paint color. Applied muntins are acceptable.
2. Replacement of the existing windows on the south (rear) facade with new windows in the existing masonry openings. Windows are to be aluminum and insulated glass with frames and sashes to match historic profiles, painted in the original historic paint color.
3. Replacement of the existing storefront on the north (street) façade with new aluminum and glass storefront per the recently installed, Landmarks Preservation Commission- approved storefront at the proposed donut shop.
4. Restoration and refurbishment of the Chelsea Hotel sign, which, while not original, is both part of historical layering of the building and a neighborhood icon.
5. Replication of the existing hotel canopy.

CB4 recommends **approval with conditions** of the following:

6. The applicant explained that the north (street) facade balconies are not required for use as fire balconies or as a means of egress. The proposed free standing painted wood planter dividers will provide privacy between adjacent dwellings. The proposal is to paint the boxes in same color as the existing balcony railings.

The Board believes the boxes with the dimensions currently proposed will cause obstruction along the ornamental railings and diminish the importance of this historic element. It is recommended that there be a minimum clear gap of one foot between the boxes and the railings.

CB4 recommends **denial** of the following:

8. Proposed commercial use rooftop addition on the north roof.

The existing rooftop comprises a number of elements: Three penthouses in brick stucco with double hung windows and glass terrace doors; a brick base of the tower in pyramidal roof pierced by windows into a currently vacant studio apartment; an existing roof surface paved with original historic William A. Underhill brick pavers including bronze plaques embedded in the brickwork;

penthouse facades of stucco and brick; and, a metal staircase to the roof of the penthouse apartments.

Construction of the proposed rooftop addition will require sealing a majority of the windows along the existing north brick and stucco penthouses landmark façade. The proposed stucco, aluminum, and glass wall is not appropriate as an addition to the building's existing façade on West 23rd Street or to the 19th century Victorian roofscape of brick masonry with its central feature brick tower with its slate clad pyramidal roof.

Furthermore, the addition will be visible from West 22nd Street as well as the east side of 7th Avenue between 22nd and 21st Streets.

9. The bulkhead over one of the proposed elevators will be visible from north side of West 23rd Street.

Existing elevator technology is available to locate the elevator machine room within the height of the current structure. Therefore the height of the structure should not be increased.

The Board also requests **additional information** for the following:

7. The applicant's presentation did not sufficiently address the proposed addition of the greenhouse structure at the south (rear) of the building, nor specify the degree of visibility from West 22nd Street. Without that information the Board could not make a recommendation. The Board requests full information on this proposed addition to properly evaluate the addition.

10. The applicant's presentation did not sufficiently address the proposed addition of a cooling tower and relocated water tanks on a new platform above the eastern side of the roof, nor specify the degree of visibility from West 22nd Street. (The cooling tower platform will be visible from West 22nd Street.) Without that information the Board could not make a recommendation. The Board requests full information on this proposed addition to properly evaluate the addition.

## **Overall Context and Impact**

While the impact of the proposed rooftop addition on existing apartments and tenants is not a matter for the Landmarks Commission, it is a major concern of Manhattan Community Board 4. The Board's concerns are the following.

There are three apartments on the roof. It is not clear to the Board what specific rights the tenants of those apartments enjoy under existing leases, including their right to use portions of the roof. However, these uses currently exist and agreement must be reached of the tenants prior to any alterations affecting occupied apartments. The Board must take existing physical context into its deliberations.

### **1. Light and Air**

The proposed rooftop addition would abut the existing occupied rooftop apartments, covering windows

at the roof level, resulting in loss of light and air to these units. The owner has noted that the north facing windows do not provide legal light and air to these apartments. However, they are an existing service provided to those tenants. The addition would also eliminate and/or greatly reduce the private rooftop space directly in front of their apartments.

## 2. Use

The owner has indicated the proposed use for the bar or restaurant nightlife use. Such use is not appropriate for the rooftop of a building which both contains residential uses and is adjacent to residential uses to the north, east, south, and west. Use of the proposed rooftop addition as a bar, restaurant, or nightlife venue, will affect the tenants living on the roof, tenants beneath the addition, and tenants and owners residing in adjacent buildings. Elevator access to bring clients to the rooftop addition jeopardizes the security of the all the existing tenants throughout the Chelsea Hotel.

The Board has strong reservations about recommending approval for an addition which might negatively impact the quality of life of existing tenants, affect the habitability of their apartments, and curtail use of a large portion of the common area of the roof.

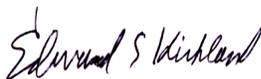
The Board requests the Commission approve items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5; approve item 6 with conditions; deny approval of items 8 and 9; and defer action on items 7 and 10 until requested information has been provided or further modifications made.

We thank you in advance for your serious consideration of these matters.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson  
Chair



Edward Kirkland  
Co-Chair  
Landmarks Committee

[signed 4/9/2012]

Damyanti Radeshwar  
Co-Chair  
Landmarks Committee

cc: Applicant