



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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CHRISTINE BERTHET
Chair

Jesse R. Bodine
District Manager

March 9, 2015

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

**Re: 630 Ninth Avenue (Film Center Building)
Proposed Lobby Improvements**

Dear Chair Srinivasan,

At its regular Board meeting on March 4, 2015, Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) voted to write on an application for proposed lobby improvements at 630 Ninth Avenue (Film Center Building). This vote reflects the discussion of the MCB4's Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee which voiced on February 11, 2015 reservations as to the appropriateness to parts of the application.

The applicant proposes to introduce security enhancements to the lobby by adding turnstiles, a reception desk, glass doors at the side corridor, and a required fire command station. The applicant also proposes to increase the light level in the lobby.

MCB4 has these reservations as to appropriateness:

- The use of turnstiles in the lobby detracts from the art deco motif of the lobby and a further study of other forms/types of security should be initiated before turnstiles are approved.
- The proposed reception desk appears too large for the space and the strong curvilinear outline of the desk top jars with the rectilinearity of the motifs which predominate in the lobby's design.
- Increased illumination would be a desirable improvement. But the Board was unable to determine from the illustrations provided by the applicant if the proposed increase in illumination was appropriate.

An Interior Landmark

Built in 1928-29 to the design of Ely Jacques Kahn, one of the City's most prominent architects working in a modernist style, the building has one of New York's finest surviving Art Deco style interior comprising its main lobby and related spaces. The lobby of the Film Center Building, 630 Ninth Avenue, was designated an interior landmark on November 9, 1982.

The building still serves film-related businesses as well as technology and office tenants. The applicant informed the Board that valuable equipment used by the tenants is constantly shuttled in and out of the lobby and to and from the upper floors. Currently a reception podium is centered on the elevator hall. According to the applicant, the rope stanchions provide inadequate security for the building.

Turnstiles and Desk

To enhance security, the applicant wishes to add turnstiles and a reception desk to the lobby. The turnstiles would be "strategically placed to work in concert" with the decorative terrazzo floor. The proposed bronze turnstiles would match the decorative lobby trim and grilles. The Board understands the applicant's request for turnstiles instead of rope stanchions and agrees that moving the current reception desk will allow a more unimpeded view of the elaborate and dazzling design on the rear lobby wall. However, the Board wonders if the turnstiles are even needed with the presence of ground floor security. In addition, other options than turnstiles which take away from the lobby should be considered. For examples, elevators could be updated to require key card authorization to go to any floors within the building.

The proposed curvilinear reception desk, according to the applicant, echoes the circular motifs which are a counterpoint to the linear and angular forms in the lobby. The Board feels, however, that a straight-edge reception desk would be a better match for the predominant angular patterns of the wall design. The Board agrees, however, that the black stone top surface would match the lobby wall stones and the bronze of the desk would match the decorative lobby trim and grilles. The desk, we are happy to note, would be raised on legs so as not to disturb the terrazzo pattern on the floor.

According to the applicant, small penetrations of approximately three inches in diameter will be required to connect electrical and signal systems to the turnstiles and desk. These occurrences are located in the terrazzo field color and are repairable should equipment need change.

Fire Command Station

Upgrades to the building's life safety systems require installation of a fire command station. The new station will be located within an abandoned, existing bronze and glass door which sits behind the proposed reception desk. The sign box located above this door, which originally announced entrance to an adjacent shop, will be repurposed for the required "Fire" signal.

Lighting

According to the applicant, the proposed cluster of baton fixtures also evokes the lobby's motifs and will utilize existing junction boxes. The new fixtures will not require new wall penetrations.

The current light level from the 1980 vintage saucer shaped scones provides only a low level of

illumination. Increased lighting on the present rather gloomy interior would be welcome. But the Board is unable to ascertain from the applicant's presentation whether the new lighting is appropriate. In the slide presented the applicant adds the new lights but the lighting represented is the same lighting that presently exists; clearly this will not be the case.

New Door

A new glass wall with frameless doors will separate the main lobby from the side corridor which exits to West 44th Street thereby, according to the applicant, improving building security. Located beyond the confines of the main lobby and under a soffit leading to the side corridor, the glazed wall will allow complete visibility from either space. The Board has no objection to the new glass wall.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet
Chair



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair, Clinton / Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee