



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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CHRISTINE BERTHET
Chair

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

June 3, 2014

Hon. Christopher Collins
Vice-Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building, 9th floor
One Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: 210 Eleventh Avenue – signage proposal

Dear Vice-Chair Collins:

On the recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) voted at its regularly scheduled meeting on July 23, 2014, voted unanimously, to recommend denial of an application for a new painted exterior sign at 210 Eleventh Avenue in the West Chelsea Historic District, and that the applicant be required to restore a historic sign in the same location that has been defaced.

The proposed new sign would be painted on existing brickwork, covering a historic painted “ghost sign” dating to at least the mid-1930s, as documented in historic photographs. Recent photographs provided by the applicant show this historic sign to be still legible, with the company name “ROYAL” in large, period font lettering, above “PAPER CORPORATION” in smaller lettering. More recent photographs taken by CB4 show “Royal” completely obliterated and “PAPER CORPORATION” partly removed.

The West Chelsea Historic District Designation Report cites the Royal Paper Corporation as a onetime owner of the building. This company sign is a character-defining feature of the district, embodying its unique industrial history and providing the kind of historic resonance that designation is meant to protect. It appears from inspection with binoculars that the historic sign was intentionally defaced through such thorough paint-stripping that the affected area appears as bare brick and stands out from surrounding brickwork.

The Board believes strongly that approval of the new sign would reward the management company for defacing the historic sign and encourage others to pursue this destructive strategy. The Board also feels that the proposed new advertising sign is in itself inappropriately large and modern. The Board would welcome a discrete bronze plaque near the building entrance, in keeping with current upscale management company signs.

The Board recommends that the Commission explore its enforcement options regarding the owner's actions in defacing the historic sign and that it require the restoration of the historic sign, including:

- A laboratory paint analysis and replication of pigment and other characteristics affecting weathering;
- Replacement paint applied in a manner that does not result in a visible distinction between remaining historic paint and reconstructed paint;
- Oversight by a qualified preservation professional under a plan reviewed and approved by the Commission; and
- Approval of in-place work samples before complete execution of the restoration.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet
Chair



J. Lee Compton
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee



Betty Mackintosh
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee