



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS

Chair

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District Manager

March 2, 2011

Hon. Robert B. Tierney
Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building, ninth floor
One Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: 353 W. 20th Street

Dear Commissioner Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board 4 is writing about the application for alterations at 353 West 20th Street in the Chelsea Historic District. These consist of a single-story rooftop addition and seemingly extensive changes in the rear of the building. The Board finds it all but impossible to comment significantly on the application since the only materials presented were a few pages of conceptual renderings with no definite indications of the materials or design elements proposed.

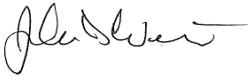
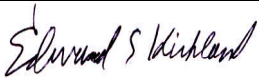

The front façade on 20th Street is a largely intact Greek Revival design, although the windows on the parlor floor have been lengthened and the doorway surrounded simplified to give it a clearly Modern effect. It was stated that the single story addition would not be visible from the public way. The architect explained that this was true from the street itself and from the 30-foot sidewalk usually considered as the public way, but volunteered that it would be quite visible from the entrance platform and much of the churchyard of St. Peter's Church almost directly opposite. Since this location almost flows into the sidewalk and is more often than not open to the public in the daytime, the Board believes that the Commission's evaluation should reflect the reality of the location and the authority given it over all exterior surfaces in the Landmark Law. The normal standard of evaluation of the appropriateness of such an addition should be followed.

The rear of the building can just barely be glimpsed from 21st Street over the playground of PS 11, which allows a view of the rear of a large number of designated houses facing

on 20th Street. Over the years both before and after designation of the Historic District these rear facades have been much modified and any sense of the doughnut lost. This is in part due to the fact that most of the row houses on this part of 21st Street were replaced by larger buildings—much of the playground site was once occupied by a ships' chandlery. Since visibility and character have been largely lost, the main principle of evaluation has been lost as well. Nevertheless, the Board believes that the general principle of the Commission should be followed: significant original elements of a rear row house façade should receive appropriate treatment.

In the absence of quorum at the Landmarks Committee Meeting, this letter has been submitted to the Executive Committee for ratification by the full Community Board at its regular meeting on March 2.

Sincerely,

		
John Weiss <i>Chair</i> Manhattan Community Board 4	Edward S. Kirkland Co-Chair Landmarks Committee	John D. Lamb Co-Chair Landmarks Committee

CC: applicant