



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

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

March 4, 2011

James P. Stuckey, President
Public Design Commission of the City of New York
253 Broadway, Fifth Floor
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Nontraditional Employment for Woman (NEW) renovation plans at
243 West 20th Street**

Dear Mr. Stuckey:

On the recommendation of its Chelsea Preservation and Planning Committee, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) voted to recommend approval of the plans and designs presented to the committee for the renovation of the Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW) building located at 243 West 20th Street.

NEW is an established workforce development program that has been on 20th Street for more than three decades in a building that was once a firehouse. The block is a mix of residential with other non-residential uses, such as a neighboring hostel and police precinct house. Presently, their building exhibits some visible signs of wear and tear. The purpose of the renovation is to improve the building front, to update interior program space to better fit their programming needs, and to replace the rooftop-located HVAC equipment.

The plan that was presented includes: a new store front with large windows; new façade elements including a flagpole, banner, and wall lights; a reconstructed sidewalk with a restored curb, bicycle rack, and garbage bin; and interior renovations affecting the lobby and classroom spaces.

CB4 recommends approval of the application for renovations as our review of their renovation plans shows that there would not be a negative impact on the community resulting from the renovation, and that the public space improvements are very welcome.

The only critical comments expressed by some community board members relate to the storefront window design, which includes large windows, rather than a more historical design with smaller window components reminiscent of the original roll-up firehouse vehicular door. Additionally, in the time since NEW has been in this building, the “non-

traditional” use of the firehouse has come to represent the “non-traditional” training for women that takes place inside, a symbolic relationship between appearance and function that is worthy of preserving. Also, the proposed design recalling a storefront was seen by some board members as losing the identifying character and as standing out unfortunately on this dominantly residential block, on which an actual store use would be inconsistent with zoning.

Sincerely,



John Weis, Chair



J. Lee Compton, Co-Chair
Chelsea Preservation and Planning

[Signed 3/4/11]

Bret Firfer, Co-Chair
Chelsea Preservation and Planning

cc: Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW)
Julie Greenberg, Kasirer Consulting, representative for NEW
NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
NYS Senator Thomas Duane
Assembly Member Richard Gottfried