

February 7, 2003

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Kenneth Miller  
Vice President for Development  
Gotham Organization  
201 E. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10017

**Re: 400 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street**

Dear Mr. Miller:

Thank you for your letter dated January 15, 2003, delivered as promised in time for consideration by Manhattan Community Board No. 4's Clinton Land Use and Zoning Committee meeting that evening. (That letter concerned several ancillary building design issues raised at the meeting convened by Councilmember Christine Quinn on January 8.) We wish to respond to your letter, and to advise you of several other matters that arose at the committee's meeting.

In specific response to your letter:

1. **Building facade.** We find the proposed reddish brick a significant improvement over the white and light gray brick shown in the original rendering. For further consistency with the neighborhood context and to deemphasize the building's height, we ask that you consider additional design changes, including:

(a) Placing the red brick also on the corners of the building. The all-glass and metal corners now in the design are particularly out of context with the surrounding buildings. At a minimum, brick corners on floors 2 to 5 (which rise to 66 feet) would bring some of the building's apparent bulk down to the base, for greater coherence with the surroundings.

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(b) Using a darker and or redder material, possibly cast stone, around the building entrance and over the commercial storefronts, in place of the white now shown. This design change also would add visual weight to the building's base and improve its integration into the neighborhood.

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2. **Sidewalk landscaping.** The suggested planters shown in the new rendering struck us as an inadequate response to the public safety concerns we have with the proposed sidewalk setbacks. Furthermore, the street trees shown in the new rendering are in fact fewer in number than what is required for all new buildings in the Special Clinton District (ZR Sec. 96-51), and therefore not much of a solution to the particular difficulties associated with the setbacks. (We trust that this is an oversight and that the final tree plantings will comply with the zoning requirements.) Unlike the brick, however, we assume that this aspect of the building's design need not be decided immediately, and we hope that we can [continue to](#) work with you in due course to arrive at a design that takes our respective concerns into account. We agree that properly and adequately lighting these areas will be desirable elements of the design.

Before the committee could consider your letter, however, it heard from a large number of neighborhood residents. Many had come to voice their dismay with this project; like [the Board](#), they find it difficult to accept that the proposed building design complies with current zoning regulations and the intent of the Special Clinton District regulations, and they urged us to redouble our efforts to oppose the project in its current design. We will continue doing what we can in that regard, of course, and our specific responses to your letter should not in any way be understood as a change in our general opposition to the project [as currently configured](#).

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One neighborhood complaint requires specific mention: several residents of [neighboring buildings located at](#) 403-411 West 54<sup>th</sup> Street complained of vibrations associated with current [excavation](#) work at the site, and were concerned about damage to their apartments. One person reported that the vibrations caused unlatched windows to open. They further reported that an engineer working for your organization had recently visited their buildings, but that he had not sought to inspect inside any apartments, where there is the greatest potential for damage. We urged them to insist that their landlord coordinate with you to provide appropriate [motion](#) monitoring to avoid damage to their apartments and buildings. We ask that you do the same.

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Sincerely,



Simone Sindin  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board No. 4

Anna Hayes Levin  
Chair  
Clinton Land Use & Zoning Committee

This letter was passed at Manhattan Community Board No. 4's February 5, 2003 full board meeting.

cc: Hon. Michael Bloomberg, Mayor  
Hon. C. Virginia Fields, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Jerrold Nadler, United States Representative  
Hon. Eric Schneiderman, State Senator  
Hon. Richard Gottfried, State Assemblymember  
Hon. Scott Stringer, State Assemblymember  
Hon. Gale Brewer, City Councilmember  
Hon. Christine Quinn, City Councilmember