

May 6, 2004

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

re: 345-347 West 22nd Street, Chelsea Historic District

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 thanks you for the opportunity of commenting on this application for alterations at 345-7 West 22nd Street in the Chelsea Historic District, and in particular, for postponing consideration of the item in order to make such comment feasible. The Board recommends denying as inappropriate to the District this application to legalize the changes made to the western portion of the front garden without the approval of this Commission.

The Board notes that this garden is among those required by the covenants drawn up by Clement Clarke Moore in the planned development of his Chelsea estate into a kind of garden suburb. While intended to contribute to the green character of the new development, the areas created by these setbacks have also afforded access to the service doorways under the stairs that have in recent times often been entries to the lower apartments. This Commission has over the years regulated these gardens with varying degrees of rigor.

A representative of the coop board of the building and the shareholder who performed the work made presentations to the Landmarks Task Force of the Board. The work consists of paving the unplanted part of the areaway in a very light-colored, almost white, stone and of using the same stone for the area steps and the coping or base under the area fence. A brushed-steel paneled door was installed under the stoop. The expressed motive for the change was at least in part to bring more light into the apartment by reflection. The configuration of the areaway remains almost identical to that on the other side of the stoop.

The request of the coop representative was that the stone in two areaways, identical in form, should be the brownstone installed by the coop in a recent renovation he stated was approved by this Commission.

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The unanimous recommendation of the Landmarks Task Force, accepted by the Board by a vote of 39 in favor, 1 abstaining, was that the use of the light colored-stone for the coping/base under the area fence and the steps down was conspicuous and unhistorical, and the material should be replaced by the brownstone historically used in these locations in brick buildings of the period with brownstone base, stoop, and trim. The light color of the areaway paving was also found unhistorical and inappropriate, but in view of the historical variety of areaway treatments in the District, where older area paving is typically of bluestone as well as brownstone and other materials have been used, we felt that brownstone, while desirable for uniformity, could not historically be required.

The shareholder responsible for the work suggested a variety of remedies. The Board does not feel technically able to evaluate these, but recommends denial of legalization as inappropriate to the Chelsea Historic District and urges that the shareholder and the coop be directed to work with staff to find an appropriate solution along the lines suggested in this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Walter Mankoff". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Walter Mankoff
Chair

Cc: Mayor Bloomberg
Local elected officials
Applicant
Community members