



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4**

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**WALTER MANKOFF**  
Chair

**ANTHONY M. BORELLI**  
District Manager

May 10, 2005

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan  
Chair  
Board of Standards and Appeals  
40 Rector Street  
New York, NY 10006

**Re: Application BSA Cal. No. 77-05-BZ, Use variance at 132 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street**

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

The applicant gave a presentation of this application to the Chelsea Preservation and Planning Committee at a meeting on April 18, 2005, and later at a duly noticed public hearing immediately before the regular meeting of the Board on May 4 following. The Board voted to have no objection to the application: 32 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstaining and 0 present but eligible to vote.

The application is to allow a residential use on a narrow lot 18 feet 9 inches wide in a M1-6 zoning district. The proposed 12-story building would follow the envelope of a corresponding quality housing (contextual) district, R10A, with the exceptions that it would not have setbacks in the front and rear in order to provide apartments of reasonable size in such a narrow building. Such an envelope would reflect the context of the block and fit into the character of the street and much of the surrounding area, since it would correspond in form and scale to the neighboring loft buildings. These, like most of the type, rise without setbacks in front and rear.

The block has long been mixed in use: many of the buildings on the block have been converted for legal residents, mostly under the Loft Law. The former dominant use on much of the block, the sewing machine district, has all but disappeared; and the buildings nearby house a wide variety of mostly conforming uses. Zoning allowing residential use has been put in place along Sixth Avenue to the east, and more recently along Seventh Avenue to the west as far north as 26<sup>th</sup> Street. The Community Board has long looked favorably on mixed use in the area, where actual industrial uses seem to have become almost an anachronism.

As in other cases the Board recommends close study of the economic analysis to ensure that this is the minimum feasible variance. It is particularly important in this case because the addition of the building on this dark, narrow street, even with the amount of glass proposed, will tend to darken it further. The economic analysis appears to show that a lower R9A building does not work. Such a building would, however, come closer to compliance with the sliver regulations

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that would govern if this were an actual residential district of the type taken as a model for the envelope.

The Board notes in this connection, however, an interesting anomaly in the comparable land sales cited in Schedule C. All but one show prices over \$100 a square foot; the only exception is that on 35<sup>th</sup> Street closest to the proposed building, which is little more than half that figure. The others are two in West Chelsea on sites that will be affected directly or indirectly by the rezoning there; the other two are on lower West End Avenue, where residential development has been active and rezoning may be anticipated by developers. Are these four locations truly comparable?

Provided the economic analysis checks out, however, the Board has no objection to this application. The apparent existence of real hardship from a truly narrow lot and the appropriateness of the proposed mixture of commercial uses on the first two floors and residential uses above justify it.

Sincerely,



Walter Mankoff  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Lee Compton  
Co-Chair  
Chelsea Preservation & Planning Committee



Edward S. Kirkland  
Co-Chair  
Chelsea Preservation & Planning Committee

cc: Hon. Michael Bloomberg, Mayor  
Hon. C. Virginia Fields, Manhattan Borough President  
Local elected officials  
Applicant c/o Deirdre A. Carson, Greenberg Traurig, LLP  
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