



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4

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WALTER MANKOFF
Chair

ANTHONY M. BORELLI
District Manager

June 15, 2005

Hon. Amanda Burden
Chair
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: ULURP NO. 040223ZSM, Special Permit at 151 West 17th Street

Dear Chair Burden:

The applicant made a presentation of this application for a special permit to operate a 32-space public parking garage in the cellar of an existing building at 151 West 17th Street to the Chelsea Preservation and Planning Committee of Manhattan Community Board No. 4 at its meeting on May 16, 2005 and at a duly noticed public hearing immediately before the full Board meeting on June 1, 2005. **The Board voted to recommend denial of the application: 31 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote.**

The representative of the applicant explained that the owner of the building was the applicant because the operator of the garage had failed to follow through on his commitment to apply for the special permit. The application is thus a belated attempt to legalize an existing use.

The garage is located on what has become a dominantly residential street, although there are some active retail and other commercial uses on the ground floors of buildings on the block. Sixth and Seventh Avenues at the ends of the block and some nearby streets, especially 18th Street just to the north, have more extensive non-residential uses. The new Rubin Museum of Art has recently opened across the street. The garage will be the only public garage on the block, although a large parking lot is located at the southwest corner of Sixth Avenue.

A representative of the block association testified at the public hearing that the garage has consistently been operated in an illegal manner. The street has been used as a shifting area to allow cars to be maneuvered in and out of the garage and for storing extra cars, thus blocking parking for residents and others and causing delays and honking from cars prevented from moving. Cars have even been stored on the sidewalk, blocking passage for pedestrians. He stated that the police had been called and had issued summonses to the garage operator, but that the illegal operations had resumed shortly thereafter. He presented photographs of these situations to the Board. Similar complaints were voiced at the Committee meeting and at a community meeting. A recent visit by a member of the Board revealed cars parked in the entranceway of the garage blocking passage for the cars massed behind them.

In short, this garage is now creating serious congestion and unduly inhibiting surface traffic and pedestrian flow. The conditions now present at the site make it impossible to make the finding required by ZR Sec. 74-52 (b).

While the Board is reluctant to approve public parking garages on residential blocks, it is willing to evaluate applications for public garages on their merits. We believe, nevertheless, that it is inappropriate to evaluate the garage in the normal fashion so long as it is operating in an illegal manner. Not only has the long delay in filing the application led to violations being issued for operating a public garage without a permit, but above all the illegal manner of the operation itself has placed a burden on the neighborhood. Since the ULURP schedule allows no pausing to attempt to resolve the problems of illegal operations and since the operator of the garage is likely to remain in possession for some time, the Board has no alternative but to recommend denial of the special permit at this time.

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

encl.

cc: C. Virginia Fields, Manhattan Borough President
Local elected officials
Applicant



