



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4

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Chair

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District Manager

December 7, 2006

Hon. Robert Tierney
Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Center Street, ninth floor
New York NY 10007

Letter re: Starrett Lehigh Building
601 West 26th St., Manhattan

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 thanks you for the opportunity to review this application to install a marquee above the entrance of the Starrett Lehigh Building, a major industrial landmark of pioneering modern design in West Chelsea. The architect for the proposal made a presentation to the Landmarks Task Force of the Board at its meeting on November 16, 2006, and the full Board endorsed the design of the proposed marquee at its regular meeting on December 6, 2006 by a vote of 31 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions.

The purpose of the proposal is to identify the building's pedestrian entrance, which was originally only of minor importance given the dominant warehouse function of the building and its location above an open rail yard. It has now become the entrance to an important office building but is truly hard to locate on a side street so dominated by this lofty block-long building.

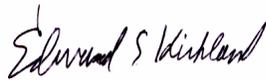
The marquee proposed will be relatively small, located between the piers framing the entrance bay that were approved in a previous application, and extending outward only enough to be visible down the street. It will have no impact on historic fabric nor break the strong planes of the building. The material is stainless steel of a type that is appropriate to the period of construction, with rounded corners and discreet horizontal banding that reflect the iconic forms of the building. The numerals of the address seem appropriate to the period. We recommend that the glass roof of the marquee, the upper surface of which is invisible from the street, be frosted so that light can come through but the view upward while passing under the marquee will not be dominated by whatever objects may have landed on the roof and not been removed.

The Board approves this solution, in part because it recognizes that permitting the perhaps more likely historic response of marking the entrance by flagpoles might risk creating a dangerous precedent in the neighborhood. This is a significant concern, since we understand that the area

near the building, filled with handsome buildings that are historically related to the Starrett Lehigh, is currently being considered by the Commission for a wider landmark designation sponsored by this Board as mitigation for impacts on historic resources called out in the West Chelsea Rezoning. A multiplication of flagpoles in the proposed West Chelsea Historic District would diminish the effect of the fine streetscapes that in fact deserve swift protection so that the pressures of development raging in this newly fashionable area will not destroy their striking character.

The Board thus recommends the approval of the proposed marquee. We take this opportunity to urge the Commission to act in the very near future to calendar for a public hearing at least the central portion of the striking historic manufacturing environment of West Chelsea, of which the Starrett Lehigh is the largest and most visible representative.

Sincerely,



Edward Kirkland
Chair
Landmarks Task Force



J. Lee Compton
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4

cc: Applicant
Local elected officials