



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND**  
Chair

**ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.**  
District Manager

March 7, 2008

Robert B. Tierney  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building, ninth floor  
One Center Street  
New York, NY 10007

Re: 451 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board 4 is writing in opposition to the application by the owner of 451 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street to create a complete new rear façade on one of a row of 12 brick late Greek Revival townhouses built by a single builder in 1849-50 and designated as a group. The street façades of the three-story-and-basement buildings are remarkably intact, although some features have been lost and two of the houses, including this one, were given a pseudo-brownstone cladding some time before designation. The rear façades are not visible from the public way, and in all probability will not be visible from the new public way to be created by the High Line.

The proposal is to raise the roof slightly to give more comfortable height in the rear rooms of the top floor, historically thought appropriate for servants, children, or storage; to replace the rear wall of the second and third floors on the ground of severe deterioration; and to extend the parlor floor and basement to the rear to the depth of the building to the east. The Board has no objection in principle to an extension of the parlor floor and basement to the depth of the adjacent house since these floors have historically been extended in row houses since early times; but the Board must judge this application as inappropriate in its present form.

First, the entire historic rear façade of the house is to be removed, leaving no portion of the rear wall to testify to its original character. The raising of the roof will lead to the removal of the minor cornice and parapet shown on one of the boards, and demolition of the wall of the two upper stories together with the major extension below will bring the complete removal of historic features and materials.

Second, the new façade, striking indeed, is to be done in a curving, flowing modern style and in modern materials dominated by irregular large glass openings without historical

precedent and inconsistent with historic additions on such row houses in general and this row in particular. Even the historic floor divisions will be blurred and lost to sight. Historically rear additions have at least respected the rectangular character of the original architecture. It is reasonable for a resident in this row, shadowed by the immense London Terrace across 24<sup>th</sup> Street, to seek more light; but the neighbors have managed to bring in light by installing large rectangular windows.

Finally, this row of houses, although designated as individuals, acts effectively as a small historic district. The character of the whole rear of the grouping will be all but destroyed by this incompatible element. The feel of the half-doughnut of gardens formed by the rear yards will be irreparably diminished.

This application should be denied. An addition at the level of the parlor floor and the basement of more compatible design and materials and of similar depth to that proposed could well be approved. The Board would be indeed glad to applaud the owner if he can find himself able to carry out his expressed intention of removing the imitation brownstone from the front façade if it can be done without significant damage to the historic brick front.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland  
Chair, Manhattan Community Board 4



Edward Kirkland  
Chair, Landmarks Task Force

Cc.

Tiffany DiMattei c/o William Vitacco Ass.  
Borough President Scott Stringer  
Representative Jerrold Nadler  
State Senator Thomas Duane  
Assembly Member Richard Gottfried  
Council Speaker Christine Quinn