



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND

Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.

District Manager

May 12, 2008

Hon. Robert Tierney

Chair

Landmarks Preservation Commission

Municipal Building, 9th floor

One Center Street

New York, NY 10007

Re: application for rooftop and rear yard additions 351 West 21st Street

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board 4 is writing in opposition to approval of an application for rooftop and rear yard additions at 351 West 21st Street in the Chelsea Historic District. The Board believes that the proposal will destroy or diminish significant historic features of the building and the row of which it is a part and is therefore inappropriate.

The proposal is a gut renovation that will leave standing only the front and the side party walls of this basically intact 1847-48 row-house, remove the largely intact rear façade as well as the unprotected historic features of the interior, and create behind the preserved front façade an entirely new apartment dwelling extending some twenty feet further into the garden and with a one-story rooftop addition visible from the street.

This proposal is inappropriate. The new structure will, contrary to the practice of the Commission, leave no intact portion of the rear façade. In particular it will destroy what appears to be a mostly intact tea-porch on the parlor floor. This feature has been enclosed, as has happened to almost all surviving tea-porches of New York row-houses, but it is clearly recognizable. The tall, deep extension into the rear yard of the new structure with its modern rear wall will break up the unity of the enclosed garden space behind this row of very similar houses built in the middle decades of the nineteenth century and severely diminish its quality.

The row is called out for its unified character in the designation report. The garden space or “doughnut” is largely intact here and has been well cared for, especially the garden behind number 351. It contains some fine large trees that will clearly be lost, among them two tall ones that frame the historic rear façade of this building. The considerable excavation required by this project will endanger others on adjacent lots.

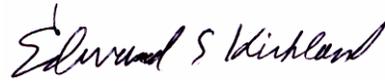
It is also proposed to erect on top of the new structure a full one-story rooftop addition stated to be based on a precedent nearby. It will be clearly visible from the street in front and to the west. The form is not well related to the plain façades of the row, in which the principal ornamentation is formed by similar recessed doorways in delicately treated styles ranging from late Greek Revival through early Italianate. The position close to the streetwall will give it an appearance visually disproportionate to the three-story-and-basement houses of the row. It will further diminish the roughly continuous cornice line of the row extending west to number 361 noted in the otherwise meager description of the early designation report. We believe this addition needs to be restudied with a view to reducing significantly the impact on the street and the row.

The Board regards this application as clearly inappropriate in the form presented.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jd'.

Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair, Manhattan Community Board 4

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Edward S Kirkland'.

Edward Kirkland
Chair, Landmarks Task Force

c.c:

Applicant

Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer

Speaker Christine Quinn

Assembly member Richard Gottfried

Senator Thomas Duane

300 West 21st, 22nd, 23rd Streets Block Association

Save Chelsea

Council of Chelsea Block Associations