



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

330 West 42nd Street, 26th floor New York, NY 10036
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

JOHN WEIS
Chair

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

July 21, 2010

Ms. Bonnie Stone
President and CEO
Women In Need, Inc.
115 West 31st Street
New York, NY 10001

Re: Jazz, On, 341 West 51st Street

Dear Ms. Stone:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) is writing to express its concerns regarding the illegal use of the property owned by Women in Need (WIN) at 341 West 51st Street and leased by WIN to Jazz On, a transient hotel operator.

CB4 has a long relationship with WIN and its ownership of this building. Approximately 20 years ago, WIN acquired this building to operate as a shelter for disadvantaged women. CB4 supported WIN's proposal to own and operate a shelter at this location. It is therefore even more surprising that WIN is now dismissive of concerns raised by CB4 and block residents about the illegal hotel use by its tenant Jazz On.

The Certificate of Occupancy for the property is for use as a Single Room Occupancy in a residential (R8) district. However, WIN's tenant, Jazz On is using the property for hotel use, marketing dormitory style rooms to a younger crowd; such use is not in compliance with fire, egress and other safety codes, is dangerous and not compatible with adjacent residential uses.

The Department of Buildings has twice issued vacate orders for the property within the past year. As you know, the building is currently closed due to construction without a permit. Prior to that, the building was closed for safety issues, namely no secondary means of egress.

In your letter of July 14, 2010 declining to attend a committee meeting to hear the community's concerns, you indicated that the property is for sale and asked for input from the community. We urge you to consider use, lease or sale of the property as permanent affordable housing, or other compatible uses that will promote a healthy and diverse residential community. In fact, to no avail, CB4 recently referred the Lantern

Group to WIN to explore the purchase of the property for use as permanent single room occupancy housing.

Until such time that the property is sold, WIN, as property owner, must accept full responsibility for any illegal or incompatible uses of its property. It is simply not acceptable to leave the responsibility to City agencies to enforce. In short, WIN must step up and be a good neighbor.

Illegal hotels are a growing problem in our community. Such use deprives our community of permanent residential units that would otherwise be affordable, disrupts the lives of the residents who live nearby and ironically, increases displacement pressures on more vulnerable populations, including those served by WIN. We urge you to do the right thing – to be a responsible owner and member of our community and ensure that the uses of property owned by your organization are in fact legal and neighborly.

Sincerely,



John Weis, Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Elisa Gerontianos, Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee



Sarah Desmond, Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

cc: NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
NYC Council Member Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
NYS Senator Liz Kruger