



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**BURT LAZARIN**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

November 8, 2018

Sarah Carroll, Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building, 9th floor  
One Centre Street New York, NY 10007

**Re: 461 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street Renovation and Rooftop Addition**

Dear Chair Carroll:

On the consensus recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee, following a duly noticed public hearing at the Committee's meeting on October 15, 2018, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4), at its regular Board meeting on November 7, 2018, voted, by a vote of 35 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote, to recommend approval of the proposed renovation and rooftop addition with recommended changes.

**Background**

461 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street is a four-story, two-bay brownstone row house with basement. According to the 1970 Chelsea Historic District Designation Report, the row of four similar Italianate houses – 455, 457, 459 and 461 – were built in 1854. These had consistent features, some of which remain, including upper-floor, street-façade windows with segmental-arch tops which appear to have been filled with recessed panels accommodating flat-topped replacement windows at 457, 459 and 461. 455's upper windows retain true segmental-arch tops which are likely characteristic of all four houses' historic condition. 461 was converted to a multiple dwelling with four apartments and is being converted back to a single-family residence.

**Rooftop Addition**

Addition of a rooftop stair bulkhead and penthouse office is proposed. Their enclosure will be highly visible over Clement Clark Moore Park and will cast shadows on the park. CB4 recommends relocation of mechanical equipment above the roof of this addition away from the park and toward the center of the addition, and that the volume of the addition itself to be set back farther from the rear façade of the house, to reduce this impact on the park.

### **Entry Door Replacement**

The existing front entry door is clearly non-historic. CB4 appreciates its proposed replacement with paired doors modeled on those of 459. CB4 also recommends that the applicant consult with the local block association, which has historic photos that may aid in more authentically replicating the house's historic doors.

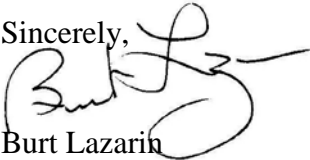
### **Cast Iron**


Original cast iron stair railings and newels are proposed to be sandblasted off-site, repainted and reinstalled. CB4 recommends stripping these historically sensitive and elaborate elements in-place by means of a reusable abrasive particle system like Sponge Jet, to avoid potential damage from removal and reinstallation. CB4 appreciates the proposed introduction of further cast iron elements modeled on local historic prototypes.

### **Replacement Windows**

While the drawings presented to CB4 show metal replacement windows, the owners' architect stated that these would in fact be wood. CB4 notes that this is required by the Commission's rules in the case of the arched first-floor front window, and that consistency of appearance calls for the upper floor windows be executed in wood with matching profiles as well. CB4 further notes that there is every reason to believe that the upper-floor front windows originally had segmentally arched tops similar to those at 455, and encourages reintroduction of these toward creating a significantly more graceful and authentic restoration of 461. Probes might easily establish whether the recessed panels above the existing windows are original or structural.

CB4 regrets that this proposal does not include floor plans, which would have greatly facilitated comprehension and discussion of the project. They would also make clear that the proposal includes complete gutting of the house's interior and replacement with modern steel-framed construction. While such interior alteration is beyond the Commission's purview, it would be helpful for the community and the Commission to remain aware of the loss of interior historic fabric which gives meaning and integrity to historic façades, possibly informing a broader conversation about historic district authenticity and future policy.

Sincerely,  
  
Burt Lazarin  
MCB4 Chair

  
John Lee Compton, Co-Chair  
Chelsea Land Use Committee

  
Betty Mackintosh, Co-Chair  
Chelsea Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council  
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President