



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

August 9, 2019

Mr. Cas Stachelberg, Partner
Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, LLC
11 Hanover Square
New York, NY 10006

Mr. Daniel B. Delahaye
USPS Federal Preservation Officer
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Room 6670
Washington, D.C. 20260-1862

Re: Morgan General Mail Facility
341 Ninth Avenue
Proposed Leasing, Rehabilitation, and Restoration

Mr. Stachelberg, Mr. Delahaye:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4), at its regularly scheduled meeting on July 24, 2019¹, voted, by a vote of 34 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, to submit the following comments on the proposed leasing, rehabilitation and restoration of the United States Postal Service's (USPS) Morgan General Mail Facility (Morgan Facility).

Background

The Morgan Facility is located on the entire block bounded by West 29th and West 30th Streets, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. In 2016 the building was determined to be eligible for listing on the State and National Registers for Historic Places.

¹ CB4's Chelsea Land Use (CLU) Committee chairs presented a summary of the project to the board at the July 24 meeting because material had been received too late for the July CLU meeting and comments were due before the September CB4 meeting.

USPS proposes to enter into a 99-year lease with Tishman Speyer (TS), a private party, for portions of the Morgan Facility and to allow TS to modify portions of the property. Because USPS considers a 99- year lease to be similar to a disposal, USPS has determined that they should initiate a Section 106 process under 36 CFR § 800.3.

Proposal

The proposed lease comprises small portions of the sub-basement through the Fourth Floor, the Fifth through Tenth Floors and a portion of the roof. The majority of the rehabilitation work will be undertaken to convert empty office and mail sorting space on the Fifth through Tenth Floors to modern office space, and to create new entrances and elevators to access this space. In addition, a 5,000 sq. ft. ground-floor retail space will be created in the northeast corner of the building and a new one-story addition will be constructed on a portion of the Seventh Floor roof.

CB4 Comments

Interiors and Ninth Avenue Entrance. We believe the proposed rehabilitation and restoration of historic interior features and finishes to be well-considered and appropriate. We applaud the proposed rehabilitation and restoration of the handsome, historic Ninth Avenue entrance and interior lobby. The image of the Ninth Avenue lobby interior renovation is beautiful; we only wish it could be seen and enjoyed by the public when the project is completed. We also believe that the proposed addition to the Ninth Avenue entrance of an ADA- compliant ramp without handrails or curbs and the small-scale tenant signage reasonable and appropriate.

West 30th Street Entrances. The proposal includes the installation of three new entrances on West 30th Street.

- **West 30th Street at Ninth Avenue - Retail Space.** Three pairs of street-level windows on the east end of West 30th Street will be enlarged to create two storefront windows and one entrance for the retail space. The three existing louver assemblies on the second floor over the ground floor openings will be refurbished. Together these are attractive and complement the Ninth Avenue entrance around the corner.
- **West 30th Street at Tenth Avenue - Tenth Avenue Tenant Lobby.** The space occupied by multiple loading docks on the west end of West 30th Street will be incorporated into a large tenant lobby with a stairwell, multiple elevators and large windows. The lobby will wrap around the corner to provide a Tenth Avenue entrance as well. Large panels on the second floor façade currently filled with concrete blocks (CMU) will be replaced with structural glass windows. The façade elements will be surrounded with dark bronze metal. The proposed treatment is modern and attractive, yet referential to the building's historic period, and is a vast improvement over existing conditions. Proposed tenant signage is reasonable and appropriate.
- **West 30th Street – Midblock Tenant Lobby.** A small mid-block entrance on West 30th Street will be enlarged to create a new tenant lobby, including new elevators. This part of the building has been covered by large advertising banners and has not been seen by the public

for a considerable period of time. The exterior will be clad in removable textured, dark bronze metal similar to that used for the Tenth Avenue Lobby and will include a canopy. Proposed tenant signage is reasonable and appropriate.

We think the proposed metal cladding works well on the first floor as window and entrance surrounds in creating an attractive identity for the new tenant entrance and lobby, contrasting nicely with the existing historic limestone. Unfortunately, TS proposes to clad the second floor with the same material, covering the limestone between the existing louvres above the lobby. This diminishes the exceptional 800 foot linear run of the West 30th Street façade and overemphasizes the new midblock entrance.

The Board recommends that the second floor limestone be restored rather than covered with metal cladding.

Other Matters. While we recognize that the current Section 106 proceeding necessarily focuses on issues of historic preservation, we want to note that there are other matters that we look forward to engaging with TS to make the project a success for all concerned, including the community. These include potential conflicts between West 30th Street vehicle traffic and pedestrians using the three newly-expanded building entrances; streetscaping such as planting trees; and the nature and operation of the proposed retail space. We look forward to having TS speak with the relevant CB4 committees as the project proceeds.

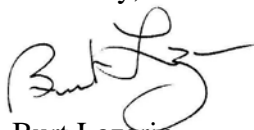
Conclusion

The Board supports the leasing, rehabilitation and restoration of the Morgan Facility as presented, with one exception:

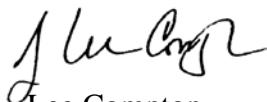
- The Board recommends the limestone on the second floor façade over the mid-West 30th Street tenant entrance be restored rather than clad with dark metal.

We look forward to working with Tishman Speyer to make this a successful project.

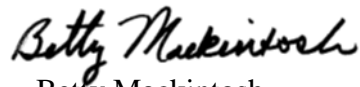
Sincerely,



Burt Lazarin
Chair
Community Board 4



Lee Compton
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee



Betty Mackintosh
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Jerrold Nadler, US Congress
Hon. Richard Gottfried, NYS Assembly
Hon. Robert Jackson, NYS Senate
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President