



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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DELORES RUBIN
Chair

JESSE BODINE
District Manager

February 10, 2016

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building, 9th floor
One Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: LPC Application for Flood Protection Barriers at Starrett-Lehigh Building, 601 West 26th Street

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

On the recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4), at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 3, 2016, voted, by a vote of 39 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote, to recommend approval of an application for flood protection barriers at the Starrett-Lehigh Building, 601 West 26th Street.

Background

The Starrett-Lehigh Building, originally built as a freight terminal with warehouses and offices over rail lines, was completed in 1931. Considered a fine example of International Style in architecture, it was designated a New York City landmark in 1986 and is part of the West Chelsea Historic District, established in 2008. The building encompasses a full city block between 11th and 12th Avenues, and is currently occupied by office and retail uses. Separated from the Hudson River by only Hudson River Park and 12th Avenue (West Side Highway), the building is in Flood Zone A which has the highest risk of flooding from a hurricane's storm surge. The building sustained significant damage from Hurricane Sandy's storm surge in 2012.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to install 13 flood protection barriers on the West 26th Street side of the building at selected doorways and storefronts as part of a building-wide resiliency campaign. Four different types of barriers, averaging four feet in height, are proposed:

- Type 1: Stanchions on jamb at three locations
- Type 2: Stanchions on building face at five locations
- Type 3: Stanchions with removable central supports at three locations
- Type 4: Window coverings at two locations.

Stainless-steel brackets would be installed at or near the jambs of doorways and storefronts. For some of the wider openings, holes in the sidewalk, covered with vanity plates, will be made to accommodate temporary posts. The hardware (steel planks and temporary posts) will be stored in the building. When a flood is anticipated, occupants of the building would be evacuated, leaving a staff of five who would install the central supports and drop the barriers – steel planks – into the brackets. This flood protection, which is water-tight, is designed for a 100-year flood (revised Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] guidelines).

MCB4 has some concerns about the appearance of the steel stanchions that would be installed on the exterior of the building, and encourages the applicant to explore other options -- more attractive elements or equipment that could be stored inside the building and deployed in the event of an expected flood.

CB4 is pleased that the Starrett-Lehigh Building, an historically-important structure, would be well-protected from flooding, and recommends that the Landmark Preservation Commission approve this application.

Sincerely,



Delores Rubin
Chair



J. Lee Compton
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee



Betty Mackintosh
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use
Committee

Enclosure

cc: Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Brad Hoylman, State Senate
Hon. Richard Gottfried, State Assembly
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council
Jorgen G. Cleemann, Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, LLC