

CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**LOWELL D. KERN**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

October 9, 2020

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

**Re: Front Façade Window Project at 456 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street**

Dear Chair Carroll:

On the unanimous recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee at a meeting on September 21, 2020, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4), at its regularly scheduled meeting on October 7, 2020, voted, by a vote of 42 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, to recommend denial of the application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for a front façade window renewal project at 456 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street unless the applicant agrees to install segmented arch-top replacement windows as required by LPC.

**Description of the Proposal**

The building at 456 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, known as Christy House, is a rowhouse located in the Chelsea Historic District Extension. A proposal presented to CB4 last year would have replaced the street façade windows with ones made of Fibrex, a composite material which is 40 percent wood fiber. The current revised proposal reflects LPC's requirement for actual wood replacement windows, a change welcomed by CB4.

**Background**

CB4's 7/31/2019 letter recommended approval of the applications for this front façade window renewal project with one condition requiring a determination of the original window style<sup>1</sup>. In our letter we said that: "456 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and the rowhouses to its west appear to have originally matched the design of number 454, immediately to its east, which is in much less altered condition and may thus serve as an indication of the original condition of all the houses in the uniform row....It is likely that the heads of 456's windows originally had arched frames and glazing similar to 454's as do the windows in some of the row's houses to the west." Our letter goes on to state that if this is true, then the windows of 456 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street would be be: "historically special windows as defined by the Commission's Rules..." The Board left it up to the Commission to determine the original design of the windows of these row houses.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/02/02-CLU-Letter-to-LPC-re-456-West-23rd-Street.pdf>

LPC approved the applicant’s proposal on 9/10/2019 with a requirement that required segmented, arch-top windows.

**Analysis and Recommendation**

CB4 has further reviewed the 1981 Chelsea Historic District Extension Designation Report. It states that 454-470 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street “were all identical when completed in 1857,” and that

a full length photograph of No. 462 taken in 1915 . . . shows the houses before alteration with . . . two-over-two windows. . . . Even the casements and the louvered exterior blinds of the parlor-floor windows were still in place. All the houses in the row would have looked much the same.

This description is followed by a full-page reproduction of the cited photo, described as “From the collection of the New York Historical Society.” A high-resolution version of this image can be viewed in greater detail on the Historical Society’s website at:

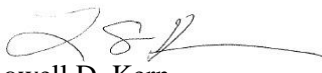
<http://digitalcollections.nyhistory.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A67154>


While the original segmental (arch-topped) windows have been replaced with flat-topped ones, the new replacement windows should be segmental, as called for by the Commission’s rules governing window replacement in façades of historic district rowhouses. The rules state that such “replacement windows may be approved if they match the historic windows in terms of configuration, operation, details, material, and finish.”


The 1915 photograph of #462 cited in the Designation Report is evidence of the “historic” windows to be matched, following the clear intent of the Designation Report. This calls for two-over-two, double-hung, segmental wood windows on all but the parlor-floor level. Here the sills have been raised, precluding recreation of the original window configuration which had a two-light transom above casement windows simulating the two-over-two glazing of the upper-floor windows.

A representative for the building owners has stated that “Unfortunately, we do not have the budget for arched windows...” CB4 urges LPC to work with the applicant to arrive at a new configuration for the windows at 456 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street honoring the original (arched-top) design including segmental arched frame and glass-top profile, and to impress on the applicant the importance of being in an Historic District and adhering to LPC rules.

Sincerely,

  
Lowell D. Kern  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4 Chelsea Land Use

  
Betty Mackintosh  
Co-Chair

  
Paul Devlin  
Co-Chair  
Chelsea Land Use

CC: Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker of the City Council  
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Owners/Representative of 456 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street