



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

June 3, 2022

Maria Torres-Springer
Deputy Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Adrienne Adams
Speaker, New York City Council
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

Re: 44-54 Ninth Avenue and 351-355 West 14th Street

Dear Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer and Speaker Adams:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) writes to express our dismay and frustration upon learning that the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) had been advised by its own structural consultant that it was feasible to repair the façades of nine historic, landmarked buildings at 44-54 Ninth Avenue and 351-355 West 14th Street at no greater risk than would be posed by demolishing them, and then did not share those facts with MCB4 and the public. At its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on June 1st, 2022, MCB4, voted, by a vote of 40 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 abstaining, and 2 present but not eligible to vote, to approve the following letter.

The nine row houses on the corner of Ninth Avenue and West 14th Street were an integral component of the Gansevoort Market Historic District. Together with preservation advocates, local representatives and community members, we called for extraordinary measures to protect them and honor their historic significance.

At our October 18, 2021 meeting, MCB4 went so far as to request an immediate stop work order until issues could be resolved to ensure that the August 2020 LPC Certificate of Appropriateness was honored.¹ We called for a full structural analysis to be presented explaining the Department of Buildings (DOB) decision to dismantle the nine street facing building façades. Our request was denied. The façades were demolished.

¹ <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/12/15-CLU-letter-to-DOB-LPC-re-Stop-Work-Order-for-44-9th-Avenue-351-West-14th-Street.pdf>

It was alarming to read in a letter published by Village Preservation, Save Chelsea, and Historic Districts Council on May 20, 2022, that, as the result of a recently secured FOIL, LPC was already in possession of an analysis, conducted by its own expert – at taxpayer expense – stating it was “technically feasible to repair the street façades and to do so with no more risk than will be created by demolishing them.” The letter references direct quotes from professional engineer Donald Friedman, in correspondence with LPC Deputy Counsel John Weiss on September 21, 2021. Mr. Friedman then went on to outline an eight-stage sequence of operations to preserve the façades.²

Said bluntly, we were misled. And the community paid a heavy price. Our trust in LPC has been undermined and the whole process put into question. **Since the information became public, MCB4 has received over 200 letters from community members expressing their outrage.**

As a result of these unfortunate events, MCB4 will be leading an initiative to proactively push for policy change regarding safeguarding buildings of historic significance and implementing stronger structural preservation measures. We wholeheartedly invite a representative from LPC to explain these events to our committee at our next Chelsea Land Use meeting on June 28th or anytime thereafter. We ask that the events leading to the destruction of the Gansevoort Market Historic District be investigated. And, most importantly, we expect transparency from the DOB, LPC and all city agencies in the future, to ensure this never happens again.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chait
First Vice Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4

cc: Hon. Eric Adams, Mayor
Hon. Jumaane Williams Public Advocate
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, City Council
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, New York State Assembly
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Dick Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Sarah Carroll, Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Eric Ulrich, Commissioner, Department of Buildings
Fred Bland, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Diana Chapin, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Wellington Z. Chen, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Michael Devonshire, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Michael Goldblum, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
John Gustafsson, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Anne Holford-Smith, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Everardo Jefferson, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Jeanne Lutfy, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission
Adi Shamir-Baron, Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission

² <https://www.dropbox.com/s/u97qdhud457gle6/joint%20Gansevoort%20letter%205.20.22%20%281%29%20-%20LINK%20for%20New%20Business%20Letter%2023%20June%202022.pdf?dl=0>