

CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD  
FOUR**

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**JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

December 13, 2022

Dan Garodnick  
Chair & Director  
City Planning Commission & Department of City Planning  
120 Broadway  
New York, NY 10271

Re: 550 West 27th Street, 260 Eleventh Avenue, 549 West 26th Street

Dear Chair Garodnick:

On the recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee, following a duly noticed public hearing at the Committee's meeting on November 21, 2022, Manhattan Community Board 4, at its regularly scheduled meeting on December 7, 2022, voted, by a vote of 43 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote to recommend approval of the proposed zoning text amendment to (I) ZR Section 98-423 to facilitate an enlargement of the Otis Elevator Building located at 260 Eleventh Avenue compliant with existing approvals by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), and (ii) ZR Section 98-242 to clarify that the increase in the permitted floor area ratio available under that section may be applied to an enlarged zoning lot.

### **Background**

On January 9, 2019, CB4 recommended approval for an LPC application to restore two adjacent buildings and combine them with each other and a new structure on a contiguous empty lot, all of which fall within the West Chelsea Historic District. (See enclosed letter) The most significant existing building is 260 Eleventh Avenue, formerly the headquarters of the Otis Elevator Company, built in 1911-12, and occupying the full length of the project site's Eleventh Avenue frontage. It abuts 549 West 26th Street, built in 1900-01 for John Williams Bronze and Iron Works. The project is completed by a site at 550 West 27th Street, the sole vacant lot in the West Chelsea Historic District. New construction on the vacant lot will house an atrium and vertical circulation serving the unified complex. Clad

in glass, its envelope will extend over the tops of both of the existing buildings, cantilevering over a rooftop terrace created on the John Williams Building and rising one story above the Otis Building. The existing buildings will have their brick-and-stone facades stripped of paint and/or cleaned, their windows replaced, new storefronts introduced, and their metal cornices restored.

The three parcels would be merged into a single zoning lot (Block 698, Lots 1, 6 and 10). The project consists of the enlargement of the Otis Elevator Building, contextual infill development on the vacant portion of the Otis Elevator Building lot, and the conversion of the 549 West 26th Street building to office use, which together would operate as a single building. The Applicant obtained approval for the Proposed Development from the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 5, 2019, pursuant to Certificate of Appropriateness No.19-34154.

The applicant now seeks approval of a zoning text amendment to ZR Section 98-423 (Street wall location, minimum and maximum base heights and maximum building heights) to facilitate an enlargement of the Otis Elevator Building located at 260 Eleventh Avenue, compliant with existing approvals from the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and to ZR Section 98-242 (Located partially within Subarea C and partially within M1-5 District) to clarify that the increase in the permitted floor area ratio ("FAR") available under that section may be applied to an enlarged zoning lot. The Enlargement would be part of a larger, as-of-right retail and office development on the 260 Eleventh Avenue property and the adjacent property located at 549 West 26th Street (Block 698, Lots 1 and 6), utilizing excess floor area from another adjacent property located at 537 West 26 Street (Block 698, Lot 10).

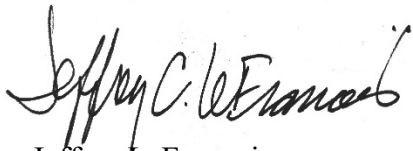
## **Analysis**

The current zoning law regarding street wall location, minimum and maximum base heights, and maximum building heights requires, on wide streets and on narrow streets within 50 feet of an intersection with a wide street, states that the street wall be located on the street line and extend along the entire street frontage of the zoning lot up to at least the minimum base height of 125 feet. The proposed enlargement to the Otis Elevator Building is unable to comply because the Otis Elevator Building is a contributing building in the West Chelsea Historic District. The building has an existing height of approximately 106 feet at the roof and 111 feet at the parapet. A complying enlargement would need to be built at the street and rise to the minimum base height of 125 feet. Such an enlargement would not be compatible with the West Chelsea Historic District because it would be highly visible from the street and would significantly alter the historic form of the Otis Elevator Building. The Proposed amendment is appropriate because it would allow the enlargement to be set back from the street line and would not be visible from the street. The amendment would modify the street wall location requirements and allow the planned enlargement of 260 Eleventh Avenue to proceed as currently designed and approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, in a manner that is contextual with the West Chelsea Historic District.

## Recommendation

We recommend approval of the application to amend the height and setback regulations of the Special West Chelsea District to allow the LPC-approved enlargement of the Otis Building and to amend the Zoning Text that was adopted in 2009 to ensure that it will continue to apply to the enlarged zoning lot. These changes are limited to this site only.

We strongly encourage the applicant to consider planting trees or pursuing elevated planters as part of the project. The applicant has indicated that they hope for LEED Gold, or higher, certification but could not yet commit until further study is done. They stipulated that the building would be all electric, would comply with existing energy code laws, and would have the necessary flood mitigations. The applicant also committed to posting available jobs on CB4's website. It is our expectation that the applicant acts in full faith to comply with these requests and commitments.



Jeffrey LeFrancois  
Chair  
Manhattan  
Community Board 4



Jessica Chait  
Co-Chair  
Chelsea Land Use  
Committee



Kerry Keenan  
Co-Chair  
Chelsea Land Use  
Committee

**Enclosure:** MCB4 Letter to LPC re 550 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street, 260 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and 549 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street

**CC:** Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council