



JESSICA CHAIT
Chair

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District Manager

CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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March 7, 2025

Derek Wolman, Esq.
Raymond and Gloria Naftali Foundation
c/o Davidoff Hutcher & Citron LLP
605 3rd Avenue
New York, NY 10158

Re: Chelsea Art Building - 508-534 West 26th Street

Dear Mr. Derek Wolman:

At its regularly scheduled meeting on April 2, 2025, Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) unanimously voted in support of preserving the artist studio space at the West Chelsea Building ("Chelsea Art Building") located at 508-534 West 26th Street.

MCB4 is grateful for the joint letter regarding this important issue sent to the Raymond and Gloria Naftali Foundation ("the Foundation") on January 17, 2025, by City Council Member Erik Bottcher, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal, Assemblymember Tony Simone, and Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine. We echo their call for the Foundation to explore all possible options to preserve this essential resource for our community while prioritizing the voices and needs of the building's tenants.

On January 13, 2025, tenants of the Chelsea Arts Building attended MCB4's monthly Arts, Culture, Education & Street Life (ACES) Committee meeting to inform members about the impending sale of the building—news that many tenants had only recently learned through media reports. During the meeting, tenants spoke about the urgent need to preserve the building as a space for artists and the vibrant, working artist community it supports. Coincidentally, the meeting also included a presentation from representatives of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) about their new "Create in Place" initiative—an interagency task force led by DCLA that acts as a first-response team to evaluate space-related challenges, coordinate resources, and promote engagement and funding opportunities for cultural and creative spaces.

On March 10, 2025, tenants returned to ACES to update us on their organizing activities, including follow up conversations with DCLA to explore available resources to assist tenants, the first tenant association meeting and a joint letter (attached) signed by Council Member Bottcher and representatives from City, State, and Federal levels, urging the Foundation to consider alternatives that would allow the building to continue serving as a hub for artistic expression and production.

We write this letter to convey our deep concern that tenants must continue to have meaningful involvement in any decisions regarding the future of the building. We also recommend the Foundation proactively engage with DCLA to discuss available City resources and ideas to preserve the space for working artists.

Since its inception in 1993, the Chelsea Arts Building has been a vital part of the West Chelsea arts community. Approximately 200 tenants—artists, small galleries, and creative professionals—have established their careers there, contributing significantly to the cultural vibrancy that defines our neighborhood and enhances New York's reputation as an arts center.

As stipulated in Gloria Naftali's wishes in her will, this building should primarily serve artists and galleries. This vision has nurtured a unique and irreplaceable cultural ecosystem that needs to be preserved.

MCB4 respectfully asks for an opportunity to better understand the Foundation's perspectives and potential strategies for maintaining the building's role as a hub for artists and galleries. It is essential that any plans regarding the future of the building are developed through close collaboration with the tenants, city agencies and the wider community. MCB4 looks forward to continued dialogue to meet and collaborate with you toward a favorable and sustainable outcome for the West Chelsea arts community.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chait
Chair
Community Board 4



Josephine Ishmon
Co-Chair
ACES Committee



Matt Green
Co-Chair
ACES Committee

CC: NYC Council Member Erik Bottcher
Congressmember Jerrold Nadler
NYS State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal
Assemblymember Tony Simone
Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine
Anne del Castillo, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs