



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

330 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 26<sup>th</sup> floor New York, NY 10036  
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512  
[www.nyc.gov/mcb4](http://www.nyc.gov/mcb4)

**COREY JOHNSON**  
Chair

**ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.**  
District Manager

December 6, 2011

Hon. Robert B. Tierney  
Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building, ninth floor  
One Centre Street  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: 473 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street**

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board thanks the Commission for the opportunity to comment on the application for significant alterations to the row house at 473 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street. While the applicants, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bailin, are to be commended for their pioneering role in the community and their stewardship of the house, and much in the application is laudable, the Board has some concerns about several aspects of the application.

The building stands on the corner of Tenth Avenue at the west end of the designated houses on the north side of this block of 21<sup>st</sup> Street in the Chelsea Historic District, and is thus the westernmost of an interesting group of five townhouses of similar design dating from the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-Century that are still marked off to some extent by their largely maintaining the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Chelsea Square addresses of the Theological Seminary campus, at least on the glass door elements visible at night. These houses were interestingly altered in fenestration in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with a distinctive window pattern and with most or all having casement windows in the front. There have been some changes since, and the fenestration pattern and especially the casement windows are not now present throughout.

The Board commends the proposed changes in the present application to bring the front of the house of into fuller conformity with the distinctive window pattern of the group to the east and in particular its neighbor at 471. It believes, however, that the proposed transformation of the parlor windows into casements, although it has precedent in the group and is very likely attractive from the interior in warm weather, would destroy the historic integrity of the façade from the exterior. The basement window treatment should be consistent in character with the window divisions above and that of nearby models with no large undivided panes.

The house is at the west end of the row, and the rear faces on a narrow alley separating it from a later commercial building just to the north on Tenth Avenue. It thus is visible to some extent from the public sidewalk on the east side of Tenth Avenue. While the proposal largely includes a historic window

pattern similar that on the front, it proposes a frosted full-sash one-over-one pattern on the third floor. At the very least this modern feature, even if on a minimally visible rear façade, should show divided lights, at least two-over- two—to minimize its unhistoric effect.

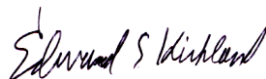
The house is exceptional in that the side façade on the west is fully visible from Tenth Avenue and has never included a store. The striking historic vertical single line of windows, which is almost an icon of the district, is to be preserved; but we believe that the use of full-sash double-hung panes, which were not available at the time of construction, in such a prominent location gives a clearly inappropriate modern effect to this rare feature. If the acceptable present fenestration is to be altered, the full-size windows should show at least two-over-two vertically divided lights in order to be consistent with windows of the period of the house.

Because of the prominent location on Tenth Avenue, the top and roof of the house are widely visible not only from 21<sup>st</sup> Street itself in the leafless season but also from the west sidewalk of the Avenue and even more strikingly from the High Line from as far south as the High Line viewing point near 17<sup>th</sup> Street. It is less visible from the north--roughly two blocks--and from some sidewalks of side streets in the leafless season. The views of the upper façade offer no problems, but views from the High Line especially, since it is roughly the same height as the roof, will be very revealing of features there. It is therefore encouraging that the drawings and mockup reveal that the proposed changes to the roof and the new features on it, will be largely unobtrusive and without any eye-catching features even from places where they are actually visible.. Views of roofs of historic buildings from the High Line indeed form a special category of views, and deserve serious thought as to how they are to be treated.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson  
Chair



Edward Kirkland  
Co-Chair  
Landmarks Committee

[signed 12/6/2011]

Damyanti Radeshwar  
Co-Chair  
Landmarks Committee

cc: Applicant