



CITY OF NEW YORK

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District Manager

October 4, 2007

Hon. Amanda M. Burden, Director
New York City Department of City Planning
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007-1216

Re: Making Sliver Law Applicable in CD4 Special Districts

Dear Director Burden:

We write to request text amendments to make the “Sliver Law” of Zoning Resolution Section 23-692 applicable throughout the Special Clinton District, the Special Hudson Yards District and the Special West Chelsea District.

The 43 story building shown in Attachment A is now under construction at 785 Eighth Avenue, on a C6-4 zoning lot that is 23 feet 7 inches wide on Eighth Avenue and 16 feet 8 inches wide on West 48th Street. As the attached image shows, the abutting buildings are 3 and 5 stories tall. This new building, which is wildly out of context with the scale of the Special Clinton District, has caused us to learn more about the Sliver Law.

In simple terms, the Sliver Law provides that in certain residential zoning districts (R8, R9 and R10 are the relevant ones in CD4), if the streetwall width of a new or enlarged building is 45 feet or less, the height of the new or enlarged building may not exceed the width of the street on which it fronts or 100 feet, whichever is less, unless it abuts taller buildings. The Sliver Law does not apply in the equivalent commercial zoning districts (C4-7 and C-6 are the relevant ones in CD4) unless the building is being developed or enlarged pursuant to the Quality Housing Program. (ZR Sec. 34-24(d)) We believe it should – at least in the three special zoning districts that make up the bulk of CD4.

The Special Clinton District, the Special Hudson Yards District and the Special West Chelsea District have all been created with careful attention, in varying ways, to the scale of new buildings and their relation to the surrounding neighborhood.

For example, the goals of the Special Clinton District include “to permit . . . new construction within the area in character with the existing scale of the community” (ZR Sec. 96-00(b)) and “to provide an appropriate transition from the mixed use character along Eighth Avenue to the

lower-scale residential character of the Clinton community on the narrow streets.” (ZR Sec. 96-00(e))

The goals of the Special West Chelsea District include “to ensure that the form and use of new buildings relates to and enhances neighborhood character and the High Line open space” (ZR Sec. 98-00(e)) and “to create and provide a transition to the lower-scale Chelsea Historic District to the east.” (ZR Sec. 98-00(f))

Sliver buildings, whether for commercial or residential use, are flagrantly contrary to these goals. They stick up like sore thumbs in areas carefully planned by the Department for cohesiveness and community character such as the Special Clinton District and the Special West Chelsea District, and will set an awful precedent for the nascent Special Hudson Yards District.

We believe that the Sliver Law should be broadly applicable throughout CD4, and should apply to commercial zoning districts as well as residential zoning districts. We recognize that this broad change would require a city-wide text amendment and therefore may be difficult to achieve. We urge you to consider it nonetheless. And if such broad reform is not possible, we urge the Department to study and recommend to the Commission making the Sliver Law applicable throughout our special districts.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Anna Hayes Levin
Chair
Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen Land Use



Walter Mankoff
Chair
Chelsea Preservation and Planning

Lynn Kotler
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Cc: Erik Botsford, Erica Sellke, DCP
electeds