



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND
Chair

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District Manager

December 13, 2007

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

**Re: Actors Studio,
432 West 44th Street**

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 is writing in support of the application by the Actors Studio to provide full access to the disabled access as part of a renovation of its premises in the former Seventh Associate Presbyterian Church, which is an individual landmark at 432 West 44th Street in Clinton/Hells Kitchen, but wishes to express its concern about some aspects of the work now underway. We thank the architect for his presentation to the Landmarks Task Force of the Board and his willingness to discuss various aspects of the renovation at some length.

The austere but handsome building is set back about 15 feet from the building line of the still largely intact streetscapes of the block's western half, which still maintains much of its historic scale and character. The deep front yards thus created on each side of the central staircase provide the space to install on the west side of the stoop a three-section handicap ramp leading downward from a gate in the historic picket fence at the western corner of the lot to an entrance under the stoop at the grade of the basement floor, which is now effectively the main entrance floor and is connected by elevator to the auditorium above.

The ramp and its railing have been designed to be as inconspicuous as possible, and in addition planting just inside the fence will further diminish its visibility. The gate is to match the historic iron picket fence. The solution seems to be an excellent one, and the Board supports it as appropriate.

This new entrance is part of a wider renovation, most of which appears to be underway, presumably with staff approval. In general this seems appropriate, and much of it is essentially invisible.

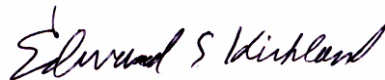
The Board has two concerns in connection with this work:

- We believe that the conspicuous perforated metal door shown in the drawings as a replacement for the dilapidated wooden door located at the west end of the building front and leading to a passageway towards the rear of the building is inappropriate. We suggest that a picket gate of a type consistent with the historic fencing would be more suitable to the period and character of the building. The architect expressed his willingness to reconsider his choice.
- Although we have no information on the historic treatment of the front yard, we suggest that the yard on the eastern side of the stoop, at present completely paved, might be studied with a view to making it more green and friendly to harmonize with the planting on the west proposed in this application to decrease the visibility of the ramp.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair, Manhattan Community Board 4



Edward Kirkland
Chair, Landmarks Task Force