



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

330 West 42nd Street, 26th floor New York, NY 10036
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512
www.ManhattanCB4.org

J. LEE COMPTON
Chair

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

May 3, 2007

Hon. Amanda M. Burden, AICP
Chair, City Planning Commission
Calendar Information Office
22 Reade Street, Room 2-E
New York, NY 10007-1216

Re: 200 Eleventh Avenue, Special Permit for Parking, ULURP # C070211 ZSM

Dear Chair Burden:

After two presentations to the Chelsea Preservation and Planning Committee of Manhattan Community Board No. 4 by the applicants for a Special Permit for additional accessory parking at a new 16-unit condominium building at 200 Eleventh Avenue on the southeast corner of 24th Street, the Board held a conforming public hearing immediately before its regular meeting on May 2, 2007, and voted to recommend denial of the application: 31 in favor of denial, 10 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 1 present but not eligible to vote.

The application is admittedly novel. Fourteen apartment owners would drive into the building, be lifted to their floor by a car elevator, and park the car in a space a few feet from the apartment door. There would be one additional space on the ground floor. Car elevators have long been used in garages and commercial buildings; but this appears to be the first use in this country of such a system for individual apartments. The Board's rejection, however, is not based on the novelty but on more mundane factors. Our decision is based on the fact that:

- The application is contrary to the general purposes of the City's Comprehensive Off-Street Parking Regulations in Section 13-00 of the Zoning Resolution, which provides: "...These regulations are a significant step forward towards bringing the Zoning Resolution into conformity with current environmental programs and safety standards concerning air pollution in the Borough of Manhattan..." and to ZR13-12 which limits accessory parking spaces in new residential developments south of 60th Street to the lesser of 20 percent of the number of new dwelling units or 200 spaces. The application seeks a special permit pursuant to ZR 13-561 to exceed that limit and provide parking spaces for almost all of the new units
- The application is contrary to PLANYC's recently-announced program to reduce vehicle trips and presence in mid-Manhattan.
- The application is contrary to the general practice of Manhattan Community Board 4 to limit accessory parking to the minimum permitted amount because of the severe impact in our area of traffic congestion and pollution.
- The application does not present sufficient evidence that all of the findings required by ZR 13-561 can be made. In particular, there is no evidence that the parking spaces are needed for the new building (finding (a)), or that "within the vicinity of the site there are insufficient parking spaces available"

(finding (b)), and, as discussed below, we are very concerned about traffic congestion in the area (finding (c)).

- The application, if granted, would by permitting accessory parking for some 90 percent of the apartments, set a dangerous and unwarranted precedent undercutting the intent of the Zoning Regulation if applied to larger buildings.

The application contains no reference to vehicular traffic conditions in the immediate area of the proposed building, although pedestrian traffic receives a brief mention. Several nearby streets are in actuality intermittently congested, especially when heavy traffic leads to delays and backups on Route 9A. At such times congestion can be severe near the point where 23rd Street dead ends at Chelsea Waterside Park and traffic westbound to the Chelsea Piers or northbound to Route 9A has to turn north for one block of Eleventh Avenue before making a left turn at 24th Street to access the highway.

The current awkward configuration of the intersection at the corner of 24th Street forces north- and west-bound traffic to make this left turn towards Route 9A and tends to direct southbound through traffic on Eleventh Avenue onto 24th Street, a narrow eastbound street that is becoming increasingly residential in character and that passes sensitive locations such as dangerous pedestrian crossings and a school. The entrance to the proposed parking is immediately off the intermittently-clogged block of Eleventh Avenue between 23rd and 24th Streets; the exit is on 24th Street. Major future development as a result of the West Chelsea Rezoning and the opening by next year of the nearby section of the Hudson River Park is sure to increase both pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the immediate area.

The Board has long been concerned with the situation at this point and nearby, and at its request the Department of Transportation has agreed to study possible remedies, in particular reversing the direction of this block of 24th Street. This change or others might limit unfavorably the options for cars leaving the building or even lead to traffic conflicts, whether the intended direction of vehicles within the building were to be continued as currently foreseen or were to be reversed. In any case the Board believes that conditions on adjacent streets mean that this proposal cannot meet the required findings on local traffic impact.

The Board also notes the receipt of a communication from the Fire Department expressing its opposition to this building on the ground that the proposed parking system is unsafe and “life-endangering.” This communication is based on a newspaper article describing the building. Evaluation of this issue is clearly not within the competence of the Board, but we have been informed that the applicant is entering discussions with the Fire Department and the Department of Buildings to resolve the issue.

Sincerely,



J. Lee Compton
Chair
Community Board 4



Walter Mankoff
Co-Chair
Chelsea Preservation and Planning

Lynn Kotler
Co-Chair
Chelsea Preservation and Planning

cc: Applicant/Representative(s)
Electeds