



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**J. D. NOLAND**  
Chair

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District Manager

July 6, 2007

Hon. Robert Tierney  
Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
One Center Street, 9th floor  
New York NY 10007

**Re: 483 West 22nd Street  
Chelsea Historic District Extension**

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 is writing to the Landmarks Preservation Commission concerning the proposed rooftop addition on 483 West 22nd Street in the Chelsea Historic District Extension. After a presentation by the architects for the owner to the Landmarks Task Force of the Board on June 21, 2007, and an extensive discussion, the Task Force voted, 4-1-0-0, to recommend denial of the application as presented on the grounds of excessive size and visibility. Because of the limitations of the summer schedule of the Board, full Board review was not possible before the scheduled hearing by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. This letter has been reviewed by the Chair of the Board.

The proposed addition has been thoughtfully designed, but the elaborate program, which includes incorporating the rooftop obstructions and mechanicals within the structure, has led to a height measured as 13 and a half feet above the roofline. It would also require extending the rear of the addition beyond the line of the rear wall of the house roughly two feet to correspond to the projection of the cornice (no measurement was supplied). This height is beyond that of the typical one-story addition, and the projection beyond the line of the rear wall would break the line of the wall below and would all but destroy the function of the historic cornice to establish a clear terminus to the rear wall. Together they would produce a mass disproportionate to a rowhouse of only four stories above a low basement.

The mockup shows that this mass would be visible to an extent not fully reflected in the materials provided. In front the addition would be set back fairly close to the line of the rooftop additions to the east, so that on the front of the building only the safety railing for a swimming pool to be set into the roof would be widely visible from along the south sidewalk of West 22nd Street, from inside Clement Moore Park directly across 22nd Street, and from the sidewalks on both sides of Tenth Avenue to the southwest. The south front of the addition itself would be

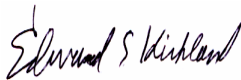
visible less widely, but would be somewhat more than minimally visible even in the leafy season from points along the far edge of the paved area near the south edge of the park and from some nearby points on both sidewalks of Tenth Avenue to the south of 22nd Street.

Visibility of the side and rear of the addition from the west sidewalk of Tenth Avenue between 22nd and 23rd Streets over the low building of the Empire Diner on the east side of the avenue is the most serious problem. Along the northern half of the blockfront the addition would be clearly visible. At and near the point of maximum visibility about 20 feet south of the 23rd Street corner the proposed large addition would be almost fully visible side-on except for a small part of its front. This sidewalk is currently next to a building site and will be more and more heavily used as the development of West Chelsea that is exemplified in this construction continues. The projection of the addition over the rear wall, fully visible from this point, as well as its total mass, would severely diminish the striking effect of the rear walls of the rowhouses along 22nd Street, which are visible and intact well eastward into the block and form a significant visual resource of the Chelsea Historic District. It is this view that reveals most clearly that this addition is inappropriate as designed.

The visibility of the Chelsea Historic District (including the extension) from the public way on the west will soon become more extensive with the current transformation of the High Line from a rusting elevated structure into a parklike walkway some 30 feet above the ground about a hundred feet west of Tenth Avenue. Views from the structure were among the most powerful arguments for saving the High Line, and the West Chelsea Rezoning that made this possible also made a major effort to establish building envelopes and design guidelines that would preserve views and openness along at least part of the blockfronts between the High Line and Tenth Avenue. Although future development is impossible to predict in any detail, it seems clear that even with construction filling in the 80-foot high envelope across Tenth Avenue from the Historic District that the front and side of the addition proposed in this application would be clearly visible eastward down 22nd Street from the High Line as it crosses the south sidewalk of the street, whatever new buildings might be constructed on the west side of Tenth Avenue. In general the work now taking place on the High Line nearby should be a reminder of the likely impacts of this new public way on the visibility from the public way of the western portions of the Chelsea Historic District (and Extension), including views of the new buildings proposed for the General Theological Seminary, and on the visibility of any future designations in the area.

Sincerely,

*[signed on 7/6/07]*  
Jean-Daniel Noland  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4

  
Edward Kirkland  
Chair  
Landmarks Task Force