



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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COREY JOHNSON
Chair

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

September 26, 2013

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

**Re: 508-534 West 26th Street
West Chelsea Historic District**

Dear Chair Tierney,

Community Board 4 is writing in response¹ to an application by the owner's architect for approval of proposed work at 508-534 West 26th Street, an early twentieth century reinforced-concrete loft building.

The work consists of the introduction of new ground-floor storefront glazing, entrance doors, and exterior stairs to openings that were previously entirely or partially blocked up. Two of these opening locations currently have a combination of opaque infill and service doors with exterior stairs, to be removed.

The proposed storefront would be of similar design to that which has already been installed on the ground floor of the loft building immediately to the west, extending a consistent treatment across much of the length of the block, and establishing a common thread between historically separate loft buildings which have otherwise distinct façade treatments, including two separate fenestration systems on their upper floors.

The Board recognizes this regularizing motive, but finds that it detracts from the two buildings' discrete architectural expressions. Their separate identities would be retained, to the enrichment of the block, if the new storefront framing pattern deviated from that of the building to the west. This could be achieved by as simple a change as omission of the horizontal division that creates a transom effect, and providing continuous glass lights from bottom to top of the masonry openings. Transoms might remain at door heads, to allow manageable door sizes and operation. As the proposed doors are recessed, their transoms would not add a jarring note of discontinuity to the otherwise unbroken vertical storefront glazing.

¹ This letter is subject to ratification of Full Board at the Wednesday, October 2, 2013 meeting.

The Board makes a further recommendation to enlarge the ground floor masonry openings to match those on the building's upper floors, which forcefully express its structural system. Intermediate piers on the ground floor now create smaller openings within two adjacent column bays, weakening the structural clarity that is the building's greatest compositional merit. The current subsidiary openings appear to be of incidental, formerly functional origin rather than a reflection of the original architect's greater design vision. Substitution of broader glazing for the intermediate ground floor piers may be welcomed as an available option by the owner, and would contribute to the vitality of the street.

The Board recommends approval of this application, but would strongly prefer incorporation of the changes described above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CJ', is written above the typed name.

Corey Johnson
Chair

cc: NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn

Attachments A and B: Revised drawing by applicant's architect illustrating MCB4's recommendation