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CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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November 6, 2015

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan
Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building, 9th floor
One Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: 360 West 22nd Street – Entrance alterations and access ramp

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

At a regularly scheduled full Board meeting on November 4, 2015, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4), on the recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee, by a vote of 40 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote, voted to recommend approval of an application for entrance alterations and a wheelchair-accessible ramp at 360 West 22nd Street in the Chelsea Historic District, provided the options described below are given due consideration.

Description of Proposal

This 16-story white-brick building with 221 cooperative apartments was constructed in 1964. The ground floor façade is faced with white marble. Proposed exterior work includes:

- To improve building entrance accessibility, the addition of a five-foot long ramp parallel to an existing low black granite planter wall is proposed. The existing five inch step leading to the entry doors would be extended approximately six feet towards the front property line to form a landing for the new ramp. In addition to the ramp, a new step would be created. Slip-resistant black granite would replace terrazzo surfaces. Handrails would be installed for the ramp.
- To improve entry access to the lobby, new automatic bi-parting metal and glass doors would be installed.
- Polished black granite is proposed to replace white marble in the front entry area. The white marble has become discolored and cracked. The existing building sign, now an oval framed in aluminum would be replaced with new stainless steel letters.

- New light fixtures on the underside of the canopy would be replaced with more efficient LED fixtures.

Community Board 4 Recommendation and Concerns

CB4 appreciates the applicant’s goal to provide easier access for building residents and to replace the deteriorating entrance area. The Board does not object to the proposed new materials, lighting, signage or doors, but questions the advisability - if not code-compliance - of retaining an isolated one-step stair which constitutes a recognized tripping hazard. This is a special concern in a building with a substantial elderly population.

At the very least, and only if this condition is found to be code-compliant, a handrail should be provided as a visual clue to the step’s presence and a safety precaution for those with balance issues. Ideally, an alternative to both this step and the proposed ramp would be found by substituting a paved approach path at a gradient not to exceed 1:20, per the maximum non-ramp slope identified by the Americans with Disabilities Act and other accessibility standards. It may be possible to achieve the required change in level from sidewalk to lobby by such a slope alone, given the substantial setback distance from the building’s property line to the entry doors. These doors’ already-proposed power activation may eliminate the requirement for a level wheelchair maneuvering space outside of them, thus allowing more space for a gentle slope. Such a solution would be safer and cleaner looking, and would reflect universal design principles. If necessary, the sidewalk could be modestly re-graded to achieve the required approach path. Such a solution should be seriously studied and presented before being dismissed. CB4 looks forward to the applicant’s response to this suggestion.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet
Chair



John Lee Compton
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee



Betty Mackintosh
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee