



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.nyc.gov/mcb4

JOHN WEIS
Chair

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

December 8, 2010

Meilan Chiu
Director of Manhattan Planning
NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development
100 Gold Street
New York, NY 10038

Re: 726 Eleventh Avenue

Dear Ms. Chiu:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) is pleased to reaffirm its support for the project proposed by the Irish Arts Center at 726 11th Avenue.

The Irish Arts Center has been a tenant of 553 West 51st Street, in the Clinton Urban Renewal Area (CURA), since 1971, operating as the sole tenant for the last 38 years. It has transformed the space from an abandoned garage into a theater, exhibition space, and classrooms. Its programming includes professional theater performances, classes in Irish music, dance, history, language, and literature, concerts and musical workshops, Irish folk dancing, film screening, documentary film making, cabaret and comedy evenings, and exhibitions of Irish visual arts, sculpture and photography.

THE PROPOSED PROJECT

At the November 16, 2010 meeting of the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee (C/HKLU), the Irish Arts Center updated the Committee on their proposed project at 726 11th Avenue. The project entails the Irish Arts Center moving from its current location at 553 West 51st Street to 726 11th Avenue. The Irish Arts Center will purchase the 2 story building at 726 11th Avenue from the City for a nominal price and convert it into a 4 story, 30,000 square foot performing arts and cultural center with a proposed 250 seat performing arts venue, visual arts gallery, exhibition space, and expanded facilities for educational programs.

PRIOR COMMUNITY APPROVALS

In a letter dated April 11, 2006, CB4 approved the Irish Arts Center eventually taking possession of 726 11th Avenue. In a letter dated October 5, 2006, CB4 expressed its preliminary approval of the Irish Arts Center's proposed project as then currently conceived.

REQUEST FOR EXPANDED SITE

The configuration of the proposed project, specifically the location of the theater within the project, necessitates the acquisition of an additional 25 foot strip of land at the rear of 726 11th Avenue. The existing 25' x 100' strip of vacant land at the rear of the project site is currently used as parking for Cybert Tire. In 2006, the Irish Arts Center approached the Board for support for the Irish Arts Center's need to acquire half of that vacant strip in order to ensure that there would be a sufficient rake of the audience seats for the planned theater at 726 11th Avenue. It was determined that the remaining 25' x 50' strip of land would become an extension of the adjacent Juan Alonzo Community Garden, located on the northeast corner lot at West 51st Street and 11th Avenue. The Irish Arts Center will need a fire egress easement in order to allow a second means of egress through the Juan Alonzo Community Garden extension. The Board would like to formally offer its support for the Irish Arts Center acquiring that 25' x 50' foot strip of land located at the rear of its proposed project and for the remaining 25' x 50' foot strip land becoming an extension of the Juan Alonzo Community Garden with a permanent easement for fire egress from the Irish Arts Center at 726 11th Avenue.

NEED FOR COMMERCIAL RELOCATION

Moving the Irish Arts Center from its current location at 553 West 51st Street to 726 11th Avenue cannot be accomplished until Cybert Tire moves from its current location at 726 11th Avenue to its new location on Site 7 of the CURA. Both CB4 and the Irish Arts Center understand the need for commercial relocation from this site, understand that the Irish Arts Center project cannot proceed without that relocation accomplished, and will work together with all community stakeholders to ensure that the Site 7 affordable housing development moves forward.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Pauline Turley, Vice Chair of the Irish Arts Center, Aidan Connolly, Executive Director of the Irish Arts Center, and Eduardo Finkielstzajn of Jonathon Rose Companies were present at the Committee meeting to detail the progress made in their plans to develop the expanded performance center, request an updated letter of support detailing project specifics, and to announce that they had partnered with well-known developer Jonathon Rose Companies for the project. The Irish Arts Center has secured funding from a wide range of source, including:

- A \$12.25 million dollar commitment for the City of New York

- A \$3.45 million grant as initial investment from the Irish Government
- A request for an allocation of 10 million dollars from the New York State government

The permanent relocation and expansion of the Irish Arts Center will ensure that the many services now provided by the Irish Arts Center to the Hell's Kitchen/Clinton community and the entire Irish American community will continue to be provided. And by including the additional strip of land at the rear of the Cybert Tire building, it will ensure that the Irish Arts Center has sufficient space for the rake of its stage so that they will be able to continue to carry on their theater performances.

We are delighted to express our ongoing support for this project and our support for the project going into ULURP in 2011.

Sincerely,



John Weis, Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Elisa Gerontianos, Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee



Sarah Desmond, Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

cc: Irish Arts Center
Cybert Tire
HPD – Sara Levenson, Meilan Chiu, Beatriz de la Torre, Jacqueline Alexander

Attachment 1: Site 9A Map, December 7, 2010