



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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CHRISTINE BERTHET
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

May 28, 2015

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

Re: 126-128 West 18th Street - Alteration to an existing storefront of NYC Landmarks Commission - Designated Building

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

On the recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee, the Executive Committee of Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) voted to recommend approval of the proposed alterations to the storefront at 126-128 West 18th Street with the changes detailed below. The applicant has agreed to investigate the feasibility of the changes and to include them in the project as possible. This recommendation is subject to ratification by the Board at its June 3, 2015 meeting.

The buildings at 126-128 West 18th Street were originally part of a row of thirteen brick-fronted horse stables erected in 1864-66. Over the years they were altered to adapt to changing times and needs, and today are used as storage garages. Oversized ground floor garage doors were retrofitted into the facades to accommodate motor vehicles. The present garage door in Building #126 eliminated the original adjacent brick pier. The garage door at Building #128 cuts into the original first floor brick piers by 6" to 8" on either side of the opening, detracting from the original design.

The current proposal would combine the buildings into one tax lot and change their use to a wine bar and dining restaurant. As part of this project the applicant proposes to: i) eliminate the oversized garage doors; ii) restore both ground floor brick piers to their original state; iii) replace the stable doors with a fixed glass window recessed approximately 16" from the plane of the adjacent piers, recalling the shape and size of the original door opening; iv) eliminate one door at the east side of Building #126 to create an entry vestibule; v) add one glass door adjacent to the new pier, as egress from the wine bar, taking the place of a window which was part of the original pier; and vi) eliminate one ground floor window, introducing a new glass door in its place as required egress for the dining room of Building #128.

The applicant is seeking Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) approval of the proposed changes.

CB4 supports the conversion of these special, historic buildings to a wine bar and restaurant, but feels strongly that the applicant can do more to preserve and restore them. We believe that replacing the stable doors with a recessed, frameless glass window and restoring the ground floor brick piers to their original state are appropriate. But we believe that this will work only if the rest of the building is restored with the greatest consistency and historical accuracy.

We therefore recommend the following changes to the proposed project:

- Install new ground-floor 36"-wide doors of painted wood and glass construction in wood frames, sympathetic to the existing upstairs windows, rather than the proposed glass doors.
- Enlarge the ground floor openings to accommodate these 36"-wide doors by replacing bricks with new custom-formed shorter bricks to match the existing bricks, toothed-in, and not by saw-cutting bricks.
- Strip paint from all brick and stone on the facades of both #126 and #128.
- Identify the type of existing stone where notes describe new keystones or stone accents to "match existing."
- Replace the stone belt-course/water-table of #126 and #128 immediately above the first floor keystones to match the neighboring historic brown-colored stone material and profile in the same location on the buildings immediately west.
- Carefully and accurately match existing brick and stone in light of the special significance and picturesque quality of the illustrious row of buildings.

The Board also requests two additional items that are not strictly part of the proposed project but would enhance the buildings and contribute to the neighborhood:

- Treat the westernmost door location in kind, with the brick infill removed from the arch above, and a glazed transom introduced so that there are four matching doors with transoms.
- Eliminate the now unnecessary curb cuts.

CB4 welcomes the restoration of these significant, beautiful buildings and appreciates the applicant's willingness to incorporate our recommendations to return them closer to their original state. We request that the applicant incorporate as many of our recommended changes as possible and that LPC encourage their inclusion.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet
Chair



J. Lee Compton
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee



Betty Mackintosh
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council