



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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Chair

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District Manager

May 12, 2008

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

Re: Application to install signage 202 Ninth Avenue

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board 4 is writing to an application to install signage on the eccentric façade of the restaurant doing business as “Jake’s Saloon” at 202 Ninth Avenue in the Chelsea Historic District and to legalize signage recently put into place. The proposed signage is excessive and inappropriate.

In point of fact, since the presentation to the Landmarks Taskforce of the Board on April 17th large additional metal signage bearing the establishment’s logo has been added covering the fences on both sides of the sidewalk bulkhead to the left of the entrance. The logo is an open buggy, but these examples originally show blurred indications of an earlier address on Tenth Avenue. Even before the presentation the logo had replaced in the central gable the name of an earlier establishment and the small circles above the windows had been filled at the with the words “Bar” and “Café” in yellow capitals on black, replacing similar signage of the previous occupant that was in the light blue that dominates much of the façade.

The proposed signage as presented includes a long canopy extending the line of the shallow gable located over the entrance all the way to the curb. The color was described as green, and it is marked on the sides and the end with the logo of the establishment in black. Large vertical banners are also proposed flanking the entrance on page A-1 of the materials. These were not included in the oral presentation.

The storefront façade of the building is a distinctive composition of red brick and colored concrete elements that building permits suggest dates from the 1920’s or possibly the 30’s. It appears vaguely Dutch in inspiration, since the dominant color is light blue and there is a representation of a windmill over the door on the far right leading to the upper floors. The present deeply recessed central entrance to the restaurant is more recent, and contains a mostly glazed double door considerably less conspicuous than the large French windows on each side that are often left open to the outside in warm weather and used as informal entrances.

The Board believes the canopy to be completely inappropriate, since it would dominate this distinctive façade, diminish its character, and make it almost impossible to see the feature as a whole. The green color would swear with the dominant blue of the polychrome storefront. The proposed banners would be too intrusive and would diminish the composition of the façade.

The function of the canopy was stated as establishing the identity of the restaurant in an environment dominated by a large sign above the front of the pizzeria adjacent to the left, also within the historic district, and the large canopy of the oriental restaurant one door further on and outside the district. Another function

was to identify the entrance, on the ground that this is confusingly inconspicuous between the large French windows on either side.

The Board recognizes the problem in finding appropriate signage for the eccentric façade, which lacks any location for a sign band. Previous operations, although they have made changes that have only occasionally received LPC approval, have not had intrusive signage. The very individual façade effectively identifies the location quite well; the problem appears to be where to locate signage that identifies the particular enterprise and guides the customer

The low signage that has been attached to the bulkhead fences seems to be working quite well to identify the restaurant and does not intrude significantly on the view of the façade. If it is legal under city regulations, this approach together with unobtrusive signage identifying the enterprise and the entrance such as small blade signs on each side of the doorway and attached without damaging the masonry might be acceptable, but not the large banners proposed.

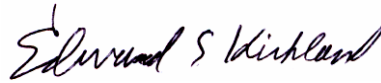
If identifying the entrance is a real problem, it might be made less obscure by installing a larger mainly glass door in the clearly un-historic doorway infill. Small horizontal bars in the French doors on each side might help as well to direct customers to the central entrance. The recessed doorway is a distinctive part of the façade, and some version of it along with the interesting details of the walls flanking the doorway should be preserved.

The board believes that an acceptable solution can be found. The present proposal is clearly inappropriate and the signage apparently installed without permits needs review.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair, Manhattan Community Board 4



Edward Kirkland
Chair, Landmarks Task Force

c.c:
Applicant
Council of Chelsea Block Associations
Save Chelsea