

FRIENDS OF

**NOHO**

PRESERVATION  
ARCHITECTURE  
LAND USE  
PLANNING

c/o Merchant's House Museum  
29 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10003  
rednyc@mac.com

November 20, 2008

**425 Lafayette St. – the Astor/Library / Joseph Papp Public Theater Individual  
Landmark in the NoHo Historic District**

As Chair of Friends of NoHo, I am unable to attend the Community Board #2 Full Board meeting tonight, but I respectfully request this letter be read into the minutes and our comments to be considered by the Board.

The Friends of NoHo support the Alternate Resolution put forth for 425 Lafayette St. – the Joseph Papp Public Theater which resides in the NoHo Historic District.

While the Joseph Papp Public Theater applicants have put forth a beautiful proposal and renderings, we disagree with elements of their proposal.

Of most serious concern to us is the bulb-out and the size and scale of the stairs and stoop. The Alternate Resolution suggests stairs and a stoop in keeping with the scale of the historic block which would therefore eliminate the need for the bulb-out. We agree that the bulb-out is in conflict with the contextual character of the NoHo Historic District and serves no cohesive purpose except to accommodate the larger stoop.

Attached are the Friends of NoHo comments given previously in testimony before the Landmarks Commission. Many of the historical groups testifying before Landmarks had similar opinions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jeanne Wilcke, Chair - Friends of NoHo

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November 11, 2008

Hon. Robert Tierney:  
Chairman  
New York Landmarks Commission  
1 Center Street 9<sup>th</sup> Floor x bxc  
New York NY 10007

**Re 425 Lafayette Street Application to alter the sidewalk, construct a stoop, and install signage, lighting, and rooftop mechanical equipment.**

Dear Chairman Tierney,

The Friends of NoHo and the community are strong supporters of the Joseph Papp Public Theater.

In regards to the request for numerous changes to the establishment, please take into consideration the concerns and opinions we have detailed below.

## **1. ENTRANCE STAIRS**

### **WE DO NOT SUPPORT THE SIZE OF THE STAIRS AND LANDING.**

We agree to the proposed addition of entrance stairs. However this area is part of the NoHo Historic District and the size and extent of the stairs and landing are not within historical frameworks for either the theater or the district. We ask that the stairs and landing be scaled back close to the original stairs in size, or a size suitable for the existing sidewalk.

The stairs should be of an updated design, yet be in harmony in color, size and appearance with the grand entry to the building.

## **2. SIDEWALK EXTENSION**

### **WE ARE STRONGLY AGAINST THE SIDEWALK EXTENSION.**

While this is a matter that many consider not to be the domain of Landmarks but of the Department of Transportation, ***we believe it is in the domain of Landmarks.***

The extension of the sidewalk in an historic district affects not only the appearance of the Joseph Papp Public Theater, a landmarked building, but that of the NoHo Historic District and the boulevard of Lafayette Street.

### **THIS DRAMATICALLY ALTERS THE APPEARANCE OF THE THEATER AND ITS ENTRY AND SETS PRECEDENT FOR NEIGHBORING BUILDINGS.**

In addition, for many years Community Boards 3 and 2, Cooper Union, DOT and neighborhood organizations have been working on an Astor Place/Cooper Union plan which changes the traffic patterns on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Astor Place along with changes to Peter Stuyvesant Park and Astor Place. The theater is requesting a sidewalk extension and narrowing of Lafayette that immediately abuts the scope of this plan. The bike lane to the west and the sidewalk extension to the east will narrow the traffic flow significantly.

### **3. SIGNAGE**

#### **THE PROPOSED AMOUNT OF SIGNAGE OVERWHELMS THE BUILDING.**

We oppose the fixed Poster Boxes. The sheer numbers - 6 - and size - almost 10 feet - overwhelm the building, hide the facade, and inhibit pedestrian traffic.

The applicant suggests that this signage is appropriate and is similar to other theaters, i.e. Lincoln Center and theaters in Times Square. We disagree as similar signage in other areas (Times Square) are often placed on the building. Where they are placed on the ground, they occur on plazas, such as Lincoln Center, very different venues than where this theater is located.

The banners proposed are acceptable.

### **4. LIGHTING**

The recessed lighting in the coffers appears to be acceptable. It is hard to determine from the renderings how bright they are, but if they mirror the renderings, they highlight the architecture nicely and bring a grand statement to a beautiful building.

We are unsure about the lighting on the sidewalks. Modest lighting would be acceptable, but the renderings were not clear. Too much sidewalk lighting would undermine the stateliness of the building and diminish the other individual landmarks that surround this one building.

As a side note, people may not be aware that there are many residents in buildings in the area. Example being the Colonnades across the street. Additional lighting inserted in the sidewalk, the stairs and landing, and on poster boxes must take into account the nearby residential nature of the district. Of particular concern is the level of illumination and hours.

### **5. BOULEVARD LUMINAIRE LAMPOSTS**

Others we have spoken to have suggested Boulevard Luminaire lampposts be added. We wholeheartedly agree on this alternate lighting scheme and ask the applicant and Landmarks to consider this, particularly as they illuminate both the sidewalk and the building. We do not support the Bishop's Crook lampposts as they light the street, not the building and sidewalk.

### **6. PRECEDENT**

Lastly, there is concern about precedents being set for other buildings in the area. While the Joseph Papp Public Theater is a unique treasure in the community, future theater spaces have been proposed and other owners have expanded how they use their spaces. Therefore there is potential for the requests of the theater to have effect on future requests by other owners, and this factor should be considered in any decisions.

Respectfully,  
Jeanne Wilcke, Chair - Friends of NoHo  
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Stan Ries, Vice Chair - Friends of NoHo

