



November 12, 2008

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

We address you and the Commissioners as NoHo residents, property owners, business owners, recognized community advocates and as universal supporters of our now three NoHo Historic Districts.

Though we object to the plan before you, our intent is not meant in any way to minimize The Public Theater's importance as a cultural institution or to penalize its ability to sustain financial health. What we do object to are the precedents set by the magnitude of this plan and the disregard it shows for the other landmarks, cultural institutions and Historic Districts surrounding it...if not other Historic Districts in NYC.

This scheme with its glass marquee, grossly out of scale stoop, permanent mid-sidewalk billboards and extension of the sidewalk into the Lafayette Street roadbed not only permanently alters the architectural and historical integrity of the building itself but the entire landscape of the Historic District surrounding it.

While we could perhaps grow to appreciate an overall large-scale plan to restore this block of Lafayette Street to Lafayette Place (destroyed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century) and the restoration of the Vauxhall Gardens (1805 to 1859), establishing a framework for accomplishing this lot by lot borders on the irresponsible. Most of the individual landmarks and the other notable buildings in the District were constructed after Lafayette Place and the Vauxhall Gardens and were never meant to compliment their existence. Among them:

- **Bayard Condict Building**, 65 -69 Bleecker St. Designed by Louis Sullivan; Lyndon P. Smith associate architect, 1897-99.
- **Robbins & Appleton Building**, 1-5 Bond St., Designed by Stephen Decatur Hatch, 1879-80.
- **Bond St. Savings Bank (Bowerie Lane Theater)**, 330 Bowery. Designed by Harry Engelbert, 1873-74. A theater from 1963 to 2007.



- **Fire Engine Company No.33**, 44 Great Jones St.. Designed by Flagg & Chambers, 1898-99
- **Schermerhorn Building**, 376-380 Lafayette St. Designed by Henry Hardenbergh, 1888-89.
- **De Vinne Press Building**, 393-399 Lafayette St.. Designed by Babb, Cook & Willard, 1885-86; addition 1890-92.

Additionally troubling is the precedent that would be set by approving the components of The Public Theater's plan. Virtually all of the buildings in this block, if not in the NoHo I District, are used for purposes other than their original intent. To send the message that any one of them have the right to transform - to add more prominent entrances, sidewalk extensions, sidewalk billboards - will forever alter the nature of the District.

In the alternative, to grant one building such concessions after the years and hundreds of thousands of dollars invested by other historic building owners to maintain the Landmarks Commissions rigid standards is most unfair. To maximize the presence of The Astor Library/Public Theater to the detriment of the other culture-supporting institutions and commercial enterprises, as one looks south from Astor Place is history altering.

We plead for a more equitable modification to this proposal, which we feel suitably supports the Public Theater's purposes and does not penalize The Public in any way as a revered cultural institution. We further feel these suggestions provide an equitable standard.

1. Reduction in size of the proposed stoop from 18' depth to 10' maximum depth. The sidewalk is 20' deep and should remain so. The 1860 stoop for the center building which was removed at the turn of the Century was less than 10' depth. A stoop of 75' X 10' not only allows the handicapped ramp, but with stairs at the north and south, provides more than ample space for waiting ticket holders/purchasers.
2. Denial of the sidewalk extension into Lafayette road bed. There are plans already in the works for alteration of Lafayette St and Astor Place and for a very large park/plaza construction for all of Astor Place. Further extending The Public's plaza toward the west (along with the extra lighting) seriously affects the view southward to other prominent buildings.
3. Elimination of the billboards. There are currently acceptable alternatives to fixed 10' billboards on the sidewalk - we do note that the Public's windows on the north and south buildings are blocked - an excellent place to put posters for upcoming performances since they are so large and will be lit anyway in the overall building lighting scheme.
4. Recessed lighting on the steps of the stoop only as a safety measure
5. Removal of recessed lighting on the curb



6. Addition of the Historic Manhattan Boulevard Luminaire's for enhanced lighting.
7. Elimination of the glass marquee with its additional lighting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jella Jones" with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

NoHoManhattan.org

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