



NYC
Landmarks Preservation
Commission

Kate Daly
Executive Director

December 18, 2009

1 Centre Street
9th Floor North
New York, NY
10007

Steve Neil
Executive Director
Westbeth Center for the Arts
463 West Street
New York, NY 10014

212 669-7926 tel
212 669 7797 fax

Re: WESTBETH / (FORMER) WESTERN ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDINGS /
LATER BELL TELEPHONE LABORATORIES, 463 West Street (aka 445-465
West Street, 137-169 Bank Street, 51-77 Bethune Street, 734-754
Washington Street), Manhattan
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 639, Lot 1

Dear Mr. Neil:

In accordance with Section 25-313 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, you are hereby notified that a *public hearing* regarding the proposed landmark and landmark site will be held on **Tuesday, January 12, 2010**, in the Public Meeting Room at the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Municipal Building, 1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North, New York. You and/or your representative are invited to attend the hearing to present information or testimony relating to the proposed designation. Please note that a government-issued form of identification is required to enter the Municipal Building. A description of the proposed landmark and landmark site are enclosed.

Public notice of the hearing identifying the proposed landmark and landmark site will appear in The City Record of December 22, 2009, and each day (other than Saturdays, Sundays and holidays) thereafter until January 11, 2010. **Please check our website, www.nyc.gov/landmarks, the Friday prior to the public hearing for any updates or changes to the hearing schedule.** If you have any questions regarding the schedule, please contact Lorraine Roach-Steele via email (lroach-steele@lpc.nyc.gov) or phone 212-669-7815. If you have any other questions, please contact Megan Schmitt at 212-669-7924.

Sincerely,

Kate Daly
KD:lrs

cc: Robert Davis, Esq.

WESTBETH / (FORMER) WESTERN ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDINGS /
LATER BELL TELEPHONE LABORATORIES
463 WEST STREET, MANHATTAN

The complex of buildings bounded by West, Bethune, Washington and Bank Streets in Manhattan's Far West Village is highly significant both as the former telecommunications laboratory of one of the oldest and most prestigious American industrial research institutions and, later, as the first federally-subsidized artists' housing project in the United States. Built in various stages, the complex consists of five buildings that occupy an entire city block: 445-453 West Street built c. 1861 as a wood-planing mill; 455-465 West Street (1896-99) and 734-742 Washington Street (1899-1900), both designed by Cyrus L. W. Eidlitz as factories for the Western Electric Company; 744-754 Washington Street (1924-26), designed by McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin for Bell Telephone Laboratories; and 151-153 Bank Street (1929), designed by engineer Warren B. Sanford as an experimental motion picture sound stage. From 1899 to 1966, the complex was occupied by the American Telegraph and Telephone Company's (AT&T) manufacturing branch Western Electric and later their research branch Bell Labs. Many important inventions were made here, including the transistor, television, radar, and a device that brought sound to the movies.

From 1968-70, the entire complex was converted into artists' residences and work space known as Westbeth; acclaimed architect Richard Meier designed 383 studio units at 455-465 West Street and an entrance courtyard at 155-168 Bank Street. Westbeth was conceived by Roger Stevens, the first chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, as the largest government-subsidized artists' colony in the world. Artists and their families also benefited from on-site gallery and performance spaces, offices and theatrical facilities. Until Westbeth, low-cost housing of this kind had only been available in Europe, and its presence in New York City, where rents were increasing drastically beyond the means of an artist's income, was vital. The complex continues to serve working artists today.