West 50s Neighborhood Association
501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

November 21, 2026

Leila Bozorg, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Planning
City Hall, New York, NY 10007
Ahmed Tigani, Commissioner
New York City Department of Buildings
280 Broadway, New York, NY 10007

Re: The brightness rule required by Zoning Resolution Section 32-64, and the LED sign at 230 West 54th Street

Dear Deputy Mayor Bozorg and Commissioner Tigani,

We write as the board of the West 50s Neighborhood Association because this neighborhood wants the flashing LED advertising sign on the Ameritania Hotel at 230 West 54th Street removed. The sign on the wall is about 2,000 square feet; the Department of Buildings' 2017 permit says 793 square feet, and the plans the Department approved in 2023 say 2,067. It runs twenty-four hours a day and throws its light through the windows of hundreds of homes, hotel rooms and businesses on West 54th, 55th and 56th Streets, four blocks north of where the Times Square signage district ends. On November 9, Council Members Wilson, Brewer and Maloney, Borough President Hoylman-Sigal, Senator Krueger and Assemblymember Simone wrote to the hotel's owners asking for a meeting of everyone responsible. Their letter is enclosed.

We are writing to you because the problem is larger than one sign, and only you can fix it.

In 2001 the City Council amended Section 32-64 of the Zoning Resolution. It provides that no illuminated sign may exceed illumination standards "established by the Department of Buildings by rule pursuant to the City Administrative Procedure Act," and that "such standards shall ensure that illumination on any illuminated sign does not project or reflect on residences." The Council wrote the protection and told the Department of Buildings to create the measuring stick. No measuring stick exists. There is no illumination standard in the Rules of the City of New York, the City Record, or any Department of Buildings Bulletin, and the Department's own statements confirm it. On October 9, 2026, the Department of Buildings told Council Member Brewer that the sections it cited "do not impose limitations on the size, brightness or height" of the sign; that email cites the size and height sections and never mentions Section 32-64. On November 9, 2026, the Department of Buildings told Council Member Wilson's office that "there are no restrictions on how bright the lights can be." On November 17, 2026, asked by Crain's New York Business why the standard was never established, a Department of Buildings spokesman said "the city is looking into the matter." In May 2024 the Department of Buildings' own Special Enforcement Team found this sign "contrary to ZR 32-64"; when the owner's architect asked where the standard was, the Department of Buildings withdrew the objection in one line.

Each of those statements is true only because the rule was never written. For twenty-five years the Department of Buildings has treated the absence of its own standard as if it were the law. The result is that there is no brightness limit the Department of Buildings can enforce on any illuminated sign outside Times Square, no matter how many homes it shines into. The protection the Council wrote for residents in 2001 has never once been applied, because the tool to apply it was never built.

The Times Square signage district ends at 50th Street for a reason. Allowing a sign of this kind four blocks north pushes Times Square into blocks where people live, and every owner on every mixed block in the city is watching what happens here. This sign is driving residents out of their homes. For an administration that has made housing its first priority, a rule that protects the people inside that housing, ordered by the Council and left unwritten by the agency, is the contradiction you can resolve.

We ask three things.

1. Direct the Department of Buildings to begin rulemaking under the City Administrative Procedure Act to adopt the illumination standard that Section 32-64 requires, and to publish a proposed rule within ninety days.
2. Answer in writing whether the Department of Buildings has ever adopted such a standard, and if not, on what basis it has told elected officials that no brightness restriction exists.
3. Accept the six elected officials' invitation to a meeting with the hotel, the advertising company and residents, with the Department of Buildings at the table.

The outcome this neighborhood wants is the sign gone. A standard is how the City gets there lawfully, for this sign and the next one. We have nine years of records on this sign and will provide any of them on request.

Sincerely,

David Achelis

David Achelis, President

Suzanne Johnson, Director

Jacob van Winkle, Treasurer. Correspondence: 200 West 54th Street, Apt 3B, New York, NY 10019; jacobnyc54@gmail.com

Enclosure: November 9, 2026 letter of six elected officials to the Ameritania Hotel
cc: Council Member Carl Wilson; Council Member Gale A. Brewer; Council Member Virginia Maloney; Manhattan Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal; State Senator Liz Krueger; Assemblymember Tony Simone; Manhattan Community Board 5

November 9, 2026

Brandon Fried and Hank Fried
Impulsive Group
132 W 47th St
New York, New York 10036

Sebastian Knight
Ameritania Hotel
230 West 54th Street
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Brandon Fried, Mr. Hank Fried, and Mr. Sebastian Knight,

We write as the elected officials representing the neighborhood surrounding the Ameritania Hotel regarding the ongoing impact of the hotel's illuminated LED advertising sign on nearby residents. We recognize that the hotel has been in communication with the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) about the sign. However, despite years of complaints and DOB involvement, the sign continues to cause significant disruption to the surrounding residential community.

We would like to review the history of DOB's involvement and explain why we believe further action by the hotel is necessary.

In October 2017, DOB issued three Class 1 violations concerning the approximately 793-square-foot LED advertising sign, each directing that the illegal sign be removed. In May 2024, DOB's Special Enforcement Team audited the sign's permits and identified technical deficiencies requiring revisions to the approved plans. The audit also found that the sign projected or reflected light onto neighboring residences, contrary to Section 32-64 of the Zoning Resolution. DOB subsequently issued Intents to Revoke the permits.

Following further DOB review requested by Council Member Brewer in a May 2026 letter, DOB determined that there was no basis for revoking the permits and that the illuminated sign does not exceed standards. Revised plans identifying the sign as a flashing advertising sign permitted in the C6-7 commercial zoning district were submitted, and a Post Approval Amendment was approved on August 6, 2026.

During the audit process, DOB also informed the property owner and advertising company of the community's concerns about light entering neighboring residential buildings. DOB subsequently stated that it had investigated these concerns and determined that the sign did not exceed applicable standards. According to DOB, the advertising company voluntarily reduced the sign's brightness during evening hours to mitigate its impact on nearby residences.

In a follow up letter dated September 11, 2026, Brewer pointed out that DOB's written finding that the sign doesn't 'exceed standards' is lacking in identifiable standards, measurement data, and inspection information. Unfortunately, the measures taken to date are not sufficient to address the concerns of the neighborhood or the elected officials who represent it. Although DOB's current position on the sign supports regulatory compliance, which may change in the future as it has in the past, the underlying problem remains unresolved.

Approximately 180 apartments have a direct view of the sign. Residents have documented bright, flashing, and constantly changing advertising that illuminates living rooms and bedrooms well into the night, even through closed shades. This has been a persistent quality-of-life problem for years. A voluntary reduction in brightness, without evidence that it has adequately addressed these conditions, is not a satisfactory resolution.

We recognize that the Ameritania operates in one of New York City's most vibrant commercial corridors, and we value the businesses, theaters, and visitors that contribute to the neighborhood. However, commercial activity and residential quality of life must coexist.

We therefore ask the Ameritania Hotel to work directly with our offices and the West 50s Neighborhood Association to develop and implement a solution that satisfactorily addresses the neighborhood's concerns. We are not prescribing a particular technical solution at this stage, but any proposed changes must meaningfully eliminate the disturbance experienced by residents, rather than merely satisfy DOB's current requirements.

We would welcome a meeting with hotel management, representatives of the advertising company, the Department of Buildings and neighborhood residents to discuss possible solutions and establish a reasonable timeline for implementing them.

We hope the hotel will approach this as an opportunity to be a good neighbor and resolve a longstanding problem constructively. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Carl Wilson
NYC Council Member, District 3

Gale A. Brewer
NYC Council Member, District 6

Virginia Maloney
NYC Council Member, District 4

Brad Hoylman-Sigal
Manhattan Borough President

Liz Krueger
NYS Senator, District 28

Tony Simone
NYS Assembly Member, District 75

cc: Community Board 5;
West 50s Neighborhood Association;
NYC Department of Buildings