

Combined Victorian Society Testimony for January 30, 2024: 39 Grace Court (LPC-24-02285); Governors Island - Buildings 111, 112 and 114 (LPC-24-05844); 121 Waverly Place (LPC-24-01815); 180 Waverly Place (LPC-24-02998); 3 Great Jones Street (LPC-24-03888); 675 Hudson Street (LPC-24-04256); 670 Broadway (LPC-24-00836)

Approximate time: 11:00; join Zoom by: 10:00

LPC-24-02285 -- 39 Grace Court - Brooklyn Heights Historic District, Brooklyn

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

39 Grace Court has been a private garden for 170 years. If that history is to be changed, the newly proposed structure needs to be of an architectural caliber similar to that of the other townhouses in both the immediate vicinity and general neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights.

The cited townhouses on Grace Court are relatively ornate, with foliated brackets flanking doorways, thick cast-iron balustrades, and elaborately designed cornices. By comparison, the proposed design of 39 Grace Court is restrained, seemingly modeled on the more simply designed townhouses in Brooklyn Heights, often from earlier time periods. A closer look, however, reveals that the proposed façade is more like a simplified and stripped version of these earlier houses. This is then combined with two-over-two sash and an oriel window, both features of later 19th century styles.

VSNY is happy to support new, traditional architecture in this district. But we urge the commissioners to require that more care and attention be given to fitting this facade design seamlessly into the environment of its immediate surroundings. And more convincing and consistent stylistic detailing is necessary.

Thank you.

No action. Some found a building here inappropriate. All had issues with the proposed design, finding it doesn't respond to the uniqueness of the site and that the historic fence should be retained.

Approximate time: 12:30; join Zoom by: 11:30

LPC-24-05844 -- Governors Island - Buildings 111, 112 and 114 – Governors Island Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

We find ourselves at a disadvantage, because we don't know the reason for the abandonment of the earlier proposal for lifts. We also have no information about the interiors, which might explain why access to building 111 can't be done through the nearly grade-level front door, with level changes accommodated on the interior. These approaches would have much less effect on the symmetrical exteriors of these neo-classical buildings.

When substantial ramp structures are built, the goal is usually to achieve universal access through the front door. But in neither building does the proposed ramp enter through the adjacent architecturally embellished main door. This makes the case for such substantial structures less compelling.

The two ramp structures would be more harmonious with the buildings if they were faced with brick and limestone rather than stucco. They would then more closely replicate the experience of using the main architectural entrance. This should always be an objective in providing ADA access.

The ramp for building 111 might usefully incorporate the existing raised terrace at the west façade.

Regarding the proposed light poles, we recall the approval a year ago, following extensive discussions, for site-wide lighting at Governors Island. The approval states that "the proposed light poles, featuring wood poles fitted with black-finished light fixtures at varying heights are simply designed and utilitarian in nature and connect with the island's maritime history related to the U.S. Coast Guard and Army." We find it odd that the posts being proposed today bear no relationship to that approved design.

Approved 10-0, with extra stairs and landing at ramp at building 114 be eliminated.

lunch

Approximate time: 1:30; join Zoom by: 12:30

LPC-24-01815 -- 121 Waverly Place - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon, commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

While we generally do not take issue with the proposed changes to 121 Waverly Place, we do not agree with removing the distinctive shutters from the parlor floor windows.

Although not the original shutters, they are a part of 121's history, much like the one-over-one parlor-floor windows. Those windows are being restored and maintained, and the shutters deserve the same treatment, as both were identified in the Greenwich Village Historic District Designation Report. The report says: "The charm of this Greek Revival brick town house of 1843 lies partly in its contrast with its neighbors, and in the length of its second story floor length windows with tall shutters."

Allowing the removal of the shutters would change the character of the building and disregard the designation report, which we feel would be the wrong decision. Thank you.

Approved 10-0; shutters "come and go" and are dealt with by staff.

Approximate time: 1:45; join Zoom by: 12:45

LPC-24-02998 -- 180 Waverly Place - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

The proposed work at 180 Waverly has several different components which require different responses.

The VSNY supports the proposed alterations to the parlor floor windows. Much of the brick masonry under the right window has already been removed. Also, the size of the new openings will be similar to parlor floor windows on many mid-19th century historic rowhouses and will match the early window alteration at the house's adjacent twin at number 182.

However, we initially questioned the proposal to match the four-over-four parlor floor window configuration at the adjacent house. But because the two houses were built as a pair, we decided that matching the historic windows of the adjacent house is appropriate. There are no detailed window drawings provided. Details of the adjacent windows, including the wide, beaded central mullion should be matched.

We do not support the applicant's proposal to install a penthouse level roof deck with railings visible from the street. This will be a single-family house with a 30-foot rear yard, a rear balcony on the parlor floor, and a roof terrace at the penthouse. We don't think it's an undue hardship to require the front railing to be set back as far back as DOB regulations will allow, 6 feet. We believe this will eliminate all visibility of the railing.

We also do not support the applicant's proposal to raise the roof at the third floor, rear façade. As noted before, 180 and 182 were built as a pair. The photos and drawings show that they both retain their historic rear roof line and third floor window openings. These are significant historic features. They must remain intact.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved with modifications, 8-2 (Goldblum, Chapin): front railing to be set back so not visible, rear façade of rooftop addition be set back from rear wall.

Approximate time: 2:30; join Zoom by: 1:30

LPC-24-03888 -- 3 Great Jones Street - NoHo Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

We have no objection to combining and enlarging the masonry openings. This is appropriate here for three reasons. It's a secondary façade. It has a somewhat random and utilitarian arrangement of openings. And this area was previously altered by bricking up two basement windows.

We urge that stone instead of a "bent metal header" cover the horizontal structural steel support in the large window. This would recall the historic basement window lintels. Perhaps this feature should be lowered within the opening to better recall the location of these windows.

And finally, the sash configuration of the smaller window should remain one-over-one. That is the predominant type of window on this façade. Introducing yet another window type—a large, single-light casement, is not appropriate.

Approved 10-0, provided windows are set back in openings (as typical), making them less visible.

Approximate time: 2:45; join Zoom by: 1:45

LPC-24-04256 -- 675 Hudson Street - Gansevoort Market Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. The multi-faceted proposal for this very prominent building has some appropriate and some inappropriate elements. Restoration of the cornice is of course appropriate. The proposed painted signs, both the sign bands between floors and the plaque signs at the ground floor, have historic precedent on this building and on 19th century commercial buildings throughout the city. Unlike many more modern sign types, we believe this type of painted sign, limited to lettering and a narrow color palette, will contribute to, and advance the appreciation of, the historic character of the district.

Some of us feel that in exchange for all this additional signage, the applicant should remove the non-historic and distracting rooftop billboard.

The work proposed for the ground floor is much more problematic. This early commercial building is characterized by wide brick piers taking the upper floors down to the sidewalk. The show windows that fill the spaces between are large enough to perform their intended function. The proposed intervention includes far too extensive a loss of historic brick masonry and widening of show windows, completely changing the character of the building's base. We also object to the painting of the remaining brick piers; they should remain unpainted and match the brick above.

Finally, the enlarged penthouse will be too visible and prominent. We urge exploration of different configurations and types of elevators to reduce the height and bulk of this addition.

No action. Possibly reduce signage, especially the horizontal bands; reduce amount of brick removal at ground floor; don't paint ground floor.

Approximate time: 3:45; join Zoom by: 2:45

LPC-24-00836 -- 670 Broadway - Noho East Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

The Victorian Society must oppose this installation. Our opposition is two-fold. First, the proposed elevator would be located flush with the Shinbone Alley façade and thus will be extremely visible from the east. This is unacceptable.

Second, the applicants are not taking advantage of the flexibility a LULA elevator allows. Commissioners, for those who aren't familiar with this type of elevator, we'll note that a LULA is an elevator with a small footprint which is designed to travel a short distance, typically three floors or less. The section on Board 8 appears to show that this LULA will travel only one floor, from 5 to 6.

670 Broadway is a very large building, whose footprint measures 86 feet by 130 feet. It has an open interior courtyard. The floor plan on Board 5 shows that the new interior stair the applicant is proposing winds its way from 5 to 6 in a spacious, open stairwell.

We find it unbelievable that, in such a large building, the applicant can't find a location for the installation of this small elevator that won't be so terribly visible. We urge that this application not be approved until a better solution is found.

Approved 9-0.