

Combined Victorian Society Testimony for March 26, 2024: 375 West Broadway (LPC-24-06747); 138 Prince Street (LPC-24-06015); 1 East 70th Street (LPC-24-07367)

LPC-24-06747 - 375 West Broadway - SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, Manhattan

Approximate time: 10:30; join Zoom by: 9:30.

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. Founded in New York City in 1966, the Victorian Society in America is dedicated to fostering the appreciation and preservation of our 19th and early 20th century heritage. The NY chapter promotes preservation of our historic districts, individual and scenic landmarks, interiors and civic art.

We were very dismayed when we saw that the new passenger elevator bulkhead is to be extended 16 feet above the existing bulkhead, and how visible this extension will be from several locations. Visible bulkheads in this district are not uncommon or necessarily inappropriate, but in scale this is more a tower than a utilitarian bulkhead.

We are sure that the designer of this proposal will state that it's the "best" design, but we'll remind everyone that "best" is a word which can have many different interpretations. To a building owner, the "best" design may be the most economical one which meets code. But to a preservationist, the "best" design would be one which has the least impact upon a building and an historic district.

We must ask if it's possible to off-set the required elevator equipment and reduce the proposed overall height, or if code requires elevator service to this roof, which already has an access stair. No action should be taken until the applicant has shown that they've looked at alternate "best" schemes.

No action; consider ways to lower the bulkhead.

Approximate time: 11:15; join Zoom by: 10:15.

LPC-24-06015 - 138 Prince Street - SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, Manhattan

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

The Victorian Society does not support this proposal for signage.

First, we find it excessive. This applicant is asking for a total of 18 signs, including one vinyl sign on the display window provided with gradient film, two vinyl signs on transoms, two illuminated pin-mounted metal signs, three digital displays, four bracket signs, and six display boxes. These last are to be set 18 inches behind the existing windows in locations which the Commission doesn't typically regulate, but which we feel must be included in the total count. We'll also note that the Bracket Sign Rules stipulate one bracket sign per establishment, or for a corner storefront, one on each facade. The applicants state that there are four brackets already in place, but since these are modern additions, they should not be considered grandfathered.

We ask that the total number of signs be reduced, and that this reduction include at least two bracket signs.

Finally, the two illuminated pin-mounted signs are not appropriate in the proposed locations. The LPC Signage Rules state "*The installation of signage will not damage, destroy or obscure significant architectural features or material of the building or storefront.*" The applicant is proposing that the pin-mounted signs be placed over the beautifully detailed brick arches, which are character-defining features of this Romanesque style building. The applicant's computer-generated drawing doesn't show this outstanding brick work, so we'll ask the Commissioners to look at the photos on Board LM-004 which does. These two signs architecturally fight with, cover up, and likely will physically damage these brick arches. They should not be approved.

Thank you, commissioners.

No action; look at suggested revisions for locations and amount of signs.

lunch

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

LPC-24-07367 -- 1 East 70th Street - The Frick Collection - Individual Landmark, Upper East Side Historic District

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

We're pleased with the modesty of the Frick's proposal for signs. Some of the examples from other institutions show how sign excesses detract from architecture. We're happy to support the application.

We suggest, however, discussion of two aspects of the proposal. One is the asymmetric placement of the primary Fifth Avenue sign with regard to the balustrade. We wonder why this was done and if it's the best approach.

Second is the enlargement of the poster sign at the pavilion at the corner of 71st Street and Fifth Avenue. The enlarged sign almost looks like a picture within a frame formed by the two pairs of columns and rusticated arch. Perhaps that effect is intentional. But does it diminish the architecture of the pavilion's magnificent Classical facade?

Approved, 8-0.