

Combined Victorian Society Testimony for July 9, 2024: 69 West 9th Street (aka 420 Sixth Avenue) (LPC-24-05299); 48 1/2 East 7th Street (LPC-24-09918)

Approximate time: 10:00; join Zoom by: 9:30

LPC-24-05299 -- 69 West 9th Street (aka 420 Sixth Avenue) - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan

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

We comment on this application because it teaches a general lesson on how not to alter entrances of protected buildings. This white and rose brick, mid-century Modern building may not be loved, but one day, before we know it, it will be 100 years old and perhaps a rare example of its type. We believe the design integrity of this building, and of all buildings, should be respected. The original design provided for a higher quality material at the entrance that reflects the rose brick above. The choice of granite material and color was deliberate. The proposed black granite has no relationship to this building and seems to have dropped in from somewhere else.

This is yet another example of an all-too-common tendency of owners to update and modernize their buildings by redoing entrances, often by stripping off historic elements and replacing them in styles that don't conform to the rest of the building. This is especially unfortunate, as entrances are often the most elaborately and carefully designed parts of the façade. Even on a Modernist building like this, where the entrance is simple, we think it's important to respect the original design. The granite façade and planters can be replaced with similar stone.

The existing iron fence and gate are not significant and can be replaced. But the proposed replacement is worse. Its heavy, closely spaced pickets make it ponderous. Surely something more suitable to a residential building and district can be designed. The applicant's own examples from around the neighborhood are better.

Approved 6-2 (Chapin, Goldblum); work with staff on spacing of fence pickets to increase transparency. (Applicant agreed with testimony on color of granite, as did Chapin and Goldblum, and was willing to change it. Goldblum noted it was probably a contextual move to relate to red brick of other buildings on the block.)

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

LPC-24-09918 -- 48 1/2 East 7th Street - East Village/Lower East Side Historic District, Manhattan

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

We strongly object to the replacement of the paired wood and glass front doors. They appear to be original, rare survivors on a tenement building. Two steps up to the entrance will remain, so it doesn't seem the work is being proposed for accessibility reasons. But even if better access is the goal, the appropriate way to achieve this is by retrofitting automatic operators that open both door leaves simultaneously.

The proposed asymmetric front door and sidelight are inappropriate. This configuration was never used historically. It would be an awkwardly intrusive presence on this largely intact historic façade.

The storefront reconstruction appears to be well designed. We would emphasize retention and replication of any remaining historic materials. The intent should be a restoration, rather than a design "recalling" the original. In that regard, the new storefront cornice needs to be strengthened to match what is seen in the tax photo.

Approved 8-0 with modifications, with cornice articulation to be increased and new single door details to better replicate those of historic doors.