

**Victorian Society Testimony for December 10, 2024: 265 Henry Street (LPC-25-03329); 260-264 Waverly Avenue (LPC-24-06787); 244 Waverly Place (LPC-25-04036); 428 Lafayette Street (LPC-24-09823); 655-671 6th Avenue (LPC-25-01478)**

***Approximate time: 9:45; join Zoom by: 9:30***

**LPC-25-03329 -- 265 Henry Street - Brooklyn Heights Historic District, Brooklyn**

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.

The Victorian Society supports the concept of a rooftop addition at 265 Henry Street, but the top of the addition is unnecessarily and inappropriately visible from the street. The bulkhead could easily be made invisible by either lowering its generous ceiling height, approximately 10 feet, or sloping it in front to follow the slope of the stairs. Neither of these changes would significantly compromise the use of this addition.

Thank you, commissioners.

***Approved 10-0 with modification that addition be lowered so not visible over the front façade.***

**Approximate time: 10:15; join Zoom by: 9:30**

**LPC-24-06787 -- 260-264 Waverly Avenue - Clinton Hill Historic District, Brooklyn**

Good morning commissioners, \_\_\_\_\_ for the Victorian Society New York.

The renovations undertaken at this façade have turned it into something it never was. The building at one time had a certain integrity in its 1930s or 40s redesign, with steel casement windows, a simple stone parapet coping, and symmetrical bays of garage and side doors. While not a lovely building, it reflected the continued development of this type of service building on this street.

The original character of the building can be inferred from the photographs of the rear. Here we can see an exceptional brick cornice and parapet. We believe the historic features of the rear façade should have provided the inspiration for renovations to the front.

We do not think it's appropriate to enlarge the small window openings on the second floor front. There are similar small window openings on the back façade. These small windows likely relate to the original carriage house function of the building.

We find the long vertical window proposed for the visible side façade to be out of character with the building and district. And finally, the proposed openings at the rear façade are too large and irregular in placement. They will overwhelm this façade.

***No action. Look to retain historic fabric and provide a consistent design; revise front cornice, possibly looking to original at rear.***

## **LPC-25-04036 -- 244 Waverly Place - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan**

The Victorian Society supports the changes proposed for the areaway and front façade at 244 Waverly. However, the rooftop addition, the removal of the entire rear façade, and the construction of a new rear façade are inappropriate as shown. These must be reconsidered.

Under other circumstances we might object to alterations to the front facades of a pair of rowhouses which create the impression that they were built as one structure. However, we support this proposal for several reasons. The ground floors at 224 were so significantly altered prior to designation that they no longer appear to be two buildings. Because they're not part of a homogeneous row, changes to the front will not contrast with identical buildings next door. They're on a street with a variety of building types, flanked by the modern garden pavilion of a restaurant facing Bank Street and a small early 20th century apartment building. And finally, replicating and extending many extant historic details will create a pleasing and coherent composition.

The proposed excavations to create new areaways will not destroy any historic paving materials. We're happy to see the proposed iron fence will replicate the materials, details and black-painted finish of a small section of historic fencing still in place.

We were also happy to see that the applicants have integrated the proposed design of the new four part window on the ground floor into the overall design by centering it under the projecting windows on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors and replicating the muntin patterns. The new string course under the ground floor windows will echo the string courses on the upper floors. The restoration of the entrance stoop, porch and door on the right side of the façade is commendable.

However, the proposed rooftop addition is too large and visible. The proposed zinc panels don't relate in any way to the historic materials and emphasize the addition's mass. It should be pulled back from the parapets and significantly reduced in size.

At the rear, we find that removing the entire historic 98 year old façade with its even older oriel windows is not appropriate.

Finally, the design of the proposed rear façade feels unresolved. The masonry cladding and paired bay windows on the top floor are balanced above a void, filled with frameless glass without details or distinction. We know, from the front facades, that this team can design an integrated façade. They need to use those same skills here at the rear.

***No action; restudy rear and rooftop designs; much support for front façade changes.— see below for update.***

***Jan. 14, 2025: approved 8-0 after rooftop addition was reduced and a vertical masonry pier added at rear façade to recall that this was two houses.***

***Approximate time: 11:30; join Zoom by: 10:30***

**LPC-24-09823 -- 428 Lafayette Street - 428 Lafayette Street Building - NoHo Historic District, Manhattan**

Good morning commissioners, \_\_\_\_\_ for the Victorian Society New York.

This building is part of LaGrange Terrace or Colonnade Row. It's one of a group of four individual landmarks that are some of the most important in the city and some of the first to be designated by this commission in 1965. Why does the calendar notice not state clearly that the building is an individual landmark?

The brief designation report notes that the building was in "neglected" condition in 1965. It's obviously now much worse. What efforts are being made by the owner, tenant, and the Landmarks Commission to bring this building back to and maintain it in sound condition, as required by law? It seems to us that creation of a plan for this is a necessary first step, before discretionary permits are issued.

The proposed lift is bulky and obtrusive. Other models are available that are more transparent. Some of them are able to recede below grade when not in use. A better design should be proposed.

***Approved 10-0, with staff to review color of lift unit.***

*Lunch*

***Approximate time: 1:15; join Zoom by: 12:15***

**LPC-25-01478 -- 655-671 6th Avenue, aka 101-127 West 20th Street, and 100 West 21st Street - Ladies' Mile Historic District, Manhattan**

Good afternoon commissioners, \_\_\_\_\_ for the Victorian Society New York.

The photographs show that this building has had subdued signage throughout its history, especially in its original use as a single-occupant department store. We think the existing Commission-approved master plan is just about perfect: it allows store identification without breaking up and marring the elegant façade.

We find the proposed master plan for signs would allow for lighted signs that are both too large in size and too many in number. It doesn't appear to differentiate between stores that occupy a single bay and those that occupy multiple bays, allowing the same number of signs for either condition.

This isn't a strip mall where people pass quickly by at some distance from the building. Nor is it any longer a marginal retail area that might need some additional marketing assistance. We think reasonable landmarks regulation should result in a differentiation between storefronts within historic districts and those outside them. Signage like what is proposed reduces that difference.

***No action: eliminate backing from transom signs, possibly reduce size, change location of window signs, create scenarios for stores that occupy various numbers of storefronts.***