

Victorian Society Testimony for January 28, 2015: 156 Waverly Place (LPC-25-03477); 30-32 Howard Street (LPC-24-09748); 788 Broadway - Grace Church (LPC-25-05551); 122-128 West 3rd Street, aka 12-14 Minetta Lane (LPC-25-05231); 945 Madison Avenue (LPC-25-06122)

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

LPC-25-03477 -- 156 Waverly Place - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan

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

The proposal before you has many different aspects. Unfortunately, the VSNY only supports the work proposed for the lower three floors of the rear façade.

The rooftop addition the applicants are showing is the most egregious component. The mock-up clearly demonstrates that it will be partially visible over the primary façade from across the street. It will also be clearly visible from multiple locations to the west. But what's more troubling is that this highly visible add-on doesn't really add living space to the house. It is essentially an empty box. The front portion, 45% of this blocky enclosure, is an open stairwell and bridge giving access to the front terrace. The rear portion, 55%, is open space, a two story ceiling for the lounge on the 4th floor. The proposed section on Board 17 shows the 19 foot tall ceiling this would provide in the lounge. Eliminating the two story ceiling at the rear and providing a sloped roof over the stair at the front, would dramatically reduce this visibility. It would also allow a larger roof terrace at the fifth floor. The front railing could then be set back, minimizing the visibility of this element.

The stoop gate is just as troubling. The photos the applicant has provided show that many of their immediate neighbors have no gates. The illegal gate must be removed. We will once again recommend the use of a chain to close off the stoop.

At the rear façade, we strongly object to the enlargement of the historic 4th floor window openings. The historic brickwork and openings should remain as they are. Equally troubling is the string of featureless windows above which would light the 19 foot tall ceiling in the lounge. Modifying the proposed fifth floor addition, as stated in our earlier comments, would eliminate those featureless windows. We acknowledge that this would change the users' experience of the lounge, but in a house which is designed with a playroom, a living room, a sitting room, a library, and a study, it seems that skylights might suffice in the lounge.

We look forward to seeing a revised proposal for 156 Waverly Place which will eliminate all

these troubling elements.

No action; reduce visibility of rooftop addition, retain top floor rear window openings, paint front windows and cornice white.

Approximate time: 10:45; join Zoom by: 9:45

LPC-24-09748 -- 30-32 Howard Street - SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, Manhattan

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

The work that was done in non-compliance has obliterated any sense that this is a historic building. It would *not* have been approved in the first instance. The stucco should be removed, the brick properly pointed, and the shutter pintles returned.

Approved 7-0.

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

LPC-25-05551 -- 788 Broadway - Grace Church - Individual Landmark, Manhattan

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

Past restoration campaigns at the church successfully used limestone to replace the original “Sing-Sing marble” for both flat and carved sections. We think it isn’t in the best interests of long-term preservation to introduce a second substitute material for the original stone. Cast stone will weather differently no matter how good it looks at first. Matching limestone is readily available.

According to the presentation, the reason for proposing cast stone instead of limestone is a deadline for completion of December of this year. Without any description of where this deadline comes from, we can’t comment on the true urgency of this schedule. In our view, only an extraordinary circumstance could legitimately affect such an important decision on replacement materials for a 175-year-old individual landmark. Preservation decisions of this kind should take the long view and not be based on short-term expediency.

Approved 7-0.

lunch

Approximate time: 12:45; join Zoom by: 12:00

**LPC-25-05231 -- 122-128 West 3rd Street, aka 12-14 Minetta Lane - South Village
Historic District, Manhattan**

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

The Victorian Society supports several parts of this proposal. These include removing a section of the structure to fashion an inner courtyard, and the proposed alterations to the Minetta Lane façade. However, the project fails when it comes to the re-design of the West 3rd Street facade. This seems to have been prepared without reference to the excellent historic photographs provided and without the same care that went into the design of the non-public courtyard facades or the Minetta Lane façade.

The mid-block courtyard will not be visible from any public way; it will not cause the destruction of any significant protected historic material; and, since the building was designed in two phases, by two different architects, it seems to be almost part of the natural evolution of this property.

The proposed change to the “Utilitarian style” Minetta Lane façade properly retains two historic features noted in the designation report and visible in the tax photos. These include the pair of exposed beams decorated with rosettes at the first story, which framed the historic stable doors. The corbelled brick cornice will also be retained. The modern infill at the ground floor will be removed, restoring the original openings. The proposed multi-light windows are not an original feature of this façade, but we find them suitable in the context of the South Village. The proposed canopy seems modest.

On the West 3rd Street façade, we do not support any of the proposed ground floor changes. Rather than the proposed removal of even more historic masonry from the ground floor, the applicant should look to the historic photos to return a more solid ground floor base to balance the weight of the building above. The number of storefronts should be reduced to reflect this. The historic garage doors had multi-light transoms and paneled wood doors, and there may have been a contrasting water table at the base. Such features should be incorporated into the ground floor façade, including the new garage door and other doors and all the storefronts. The proposed storefront framing is an under-designed aluminum tube with infill of seemingly random and unpleasant proportions.

The storefronts should be painted wood, with a detailed profile, bulkheads and multi-light transoms. HVAC vents should not be incorporated into the transoms in what is essentially an area of new construction. The mechanical equipment should be vented into the courtyard, roof, or window wells. The proposed storefront signs, consisting of cutout letters

stuck to ventilation louvers, are of an insultingly cheap design on what will be the most important public face of the building.

On the upper floors, we support the installation of the multi-light aluminum windows, but the sills should not be dropped two courses. This would reduce the façade's solidity, an important historic characteristic of this building. The original window openings should be retained.

We also couldn't find a sample of the proposed window color. This should be provided.

Finally, we find the proposed rooftop addition overly visible from too many locations. It should be reduced by one story.

Thank you, commissioners.

No action; reduce height and visibility of addition; provide more detail and interest to ground floor at 3rd Street; try to retain side walls of buildings.

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

LPC-25-06122 -- 945 Madison Avenue—Upper East Side Historic District, Manhattan

While a Brutalist-style building by Marcel Breuer isn't an obvious focus for the Victorian Society, we believe it's important to review proposed work on important buildings of any era. Further, the maintenance of a building's stylistic integrity should be a universal principle. This architecturally important building has become an icon of Madison Avenue.

We do not take issue with the proposed elevator bulkhead, but we do not see any need to alter the entrance. The original bronze details pictured are accents to the concrete. The proposed alteration is not an accent but rather an attempt to turn the canopy into a flashy marquee that is not in keeping with Breuer's original design. Additionally, we would prefer if the Sotheby's backlit logo was not drilled into the wall. The new sign should work within the existing vitrine as the Whitney, Met, and Frick did when they occupied the building.

There are few exceptional examples of Brutalist-style buildings in New York, and only two designated buildings by this important architect. We must work to preserve them as best as possible.

Approved in part, 8-0, for elevator bulkhead and signs. Continue to study entrance lighting and canopy (little support for metal inset in canopy).