

**Victorian Society Testimony for January 7, 2025: 43 Sterling Place (LPC-25-0051); 38 Bedford Street (LPC-24-11530); 271 West 11th Street (LPC-25-01736); 21 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street Individual Landmark (LPC-25-02050); 1312 Madison Avenue (aka 1306-1312 Madison Avenue, 26-28 East 93rd Street) (LPC-25-03677)**

***Approximate time: 9:50; join Zoom by: 9:30***

**LPC-25-00512 – 43 Sterling Place – Park Slope Historic District Extension II, Brooklyn.**

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

The Victorian Society strongly opposes legalization of the removal of a largely intact bluestone sidewalk and its replacement with concrete. The Commission has long recognized that historic pavements and street furnishings contribute to the character and sense of place of historic districts. It has worked long and hard over decades to prevent the loss of historic paving materials and to encourage restoration of historic pavements when they're missing. These efforts include the longstanding agreement by the Department of Transportation to accept bluestone for sidewalk pavement and for the city to stop removing historic pavements in historic districts as part of city capital or repair projects. These agreements were initiated and pursued to completion by the Landmarks Commission.

The insurance and DOT documents the applicant has provided require only that the sidewalk be made safe, not that it be replaced with a different material.

Many bluestone sidewalks in this and other districts have, in recent years, been restored by resetting and partial replacement with new bluestone as needed. And some concrete sidewalks have been replaced entirely with new bluestone. The only appropriate outcome here is to remove the concrete installed without a permit and install new bluestone pavers in a typical historic size and pattern.

***Approved 9-0, with applicant to attempt tinting the concrete a darker color.***

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

**LPC-24-11530 – 38 Bedford Street – Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan**

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

It remains our view that on small scale buildings such as row houses, replacement windows should match the wood material of original windows, as well as their configuration, operation, details, and finish. If the Commission is to consider a substitute material, then this application is sorely deficient in its description of the proposed fiberglass replacements.

To our knowledge, fiberglass windows have not been used in historic districts. We're not familiar with their appearance, details, finishes, or weathering characteristics, and we suspect that the commissioners are also unfamiliar with them. They may not be less appropriate than the aluminum-clad windows the Commission sometimes approves. But the presentation materials provide little in the way of useful description. For a new type of window in historic districts, a sample window should be provided, showing the details of construction, dimensions, putty lines, finishes, and so on.

The Photoshop illustration of the brick mold is useless; what we see looks nothing like a traditional brick mold or even like what is shown on the section drawing. The brick mold shown in the section doesn't match the existing, historic brick mold.

We assume that the Commission would not want to approve a precedent-setting proposal for a relatively unknown window type without a full understanding of its appearance and weathering characteristics compared to a historic, painted wood window. We also assume that the Commission would not want to approve the removal of historic wood windows that can be restored. Therefore, we expect that additional information will be required before a decision is made. We ask that the hearing remain open so that the public can testify once adequate descriptive material is available.

***Approved 7-2 (Chu and Lutf) but only on condition that exposed tracks can match color of windows. Application changed to incorporate wood brick molds.***

**Approximate time: 10:50; join Zoom by: 9:50**

**LPC-25-01736 -- 271 West 11th Street - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan**

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

The Victorian Society supports several aspects of this proposal for façade alterations at 271 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street. We question others.

At first glance, 271 West 11<sup>th</sup> and its neighbor at 269 appear to be a pair. But the houses were the work of two different contractors and were not identical.

We find it appropriate to copy some of the features of 269 which could be considered “standard” for an 1836 Greek Revival rowhouse, such as the multi-light sash and the tall parlor floor window openings. We also support removing the modern parapet wall and recreating the dentilated cornice seen in the tax photo of 271.

However, because 269 and 271 were not built as a pair, we find it inappropriate to copy the details of the door surround at 269 for the new entrance at 271. We say this for several reasons.

First, the door surround at 269 is neither original nor does it replicate an historic feature of the building. What you see now at 269 is a modern pastiche of Greek Revival entrances, constructed pursuant to a Certificate of Appropriateness issued in 2016. This speculative reconstruction was necessary because by the time of the 1940 tax photo, the stoop of no. 269 had already been removed.

On the other hand, the 1940 tax photo clearly shows the original stoop and parlor floor entrance at 271. It featured free-standing columns instead of the flat pilasters now in place at 269. It also featured a brownstone pediment that appears to have projected much farther out than the modern pediment at its neighbor. It was acceptable to install the pastiche at 269 because there was no evidence for the historic design of this entrance. It is unacceptable to do so at 271 since good photographic evidence of this historic feature exists. The 1940 photo must be used as the model for the new door surround at 271.

We also find the proposed construction details for the door surround to be inappropriate. People using the new parlor floor entrance will be close enough to this door surround to touch it. It would be preferred to use cast brownstone for this feature, but even if stucco is used, it should be applied to a masonry base rather than wood blocking.

Finally, we find the proposed iron railings at the stoop and areaway are too light-weight and generic. Original Greek Revival ironwork on rowhouses in this and other historic districts should serve as models for the railings here.

***Approved 9-0, with modifications: work with staff to increase weight of ironwork, to construct door surround of solid masonry, and to (modestly) differentiate the surround from no. 269.***

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

**LPC-25-02050 – 21 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street Individual Landmark, Manhattan**

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

This proposal is problematic in some of the same ways as the one for 38 Bedford Street we saw earlier today. In this case, the use of a substitute material for historic windows in a row house is even more inappropriate because this is an individual landmark, one of seven such individual landmark row houses on this block.

The first thing to determine is whether the existing windows are historic. They largely match the windows on the other buildings in this row. This includes the parlor floor casement windows, even though it appears the lowest glass panels may have been replaced with solid panels. If the windows are historic, they should be restored.

If the windows aren't historic or are unsalvageable, the new windows should be wood and should match the dimensions, details, and finish of the historic windows. We think changing the direction of the casement swing is a minor and appropriate alteration.

We are also concerned about the loss of the leaded glass, steel-framed basement windows and door. While not original, these may be significant in themselves and worthy of preservation.

***Approved 8-0, with the condition that the dimensions of the parlor floor windows more closely match the originals; if not possible in aluminum, parlor floor windows to be wood.***

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

**LPC-25-03677 -- 1312 Madison Avenue (aka 1306-1312 Madison Avenue, 26-28 East 93rd Street) - Carnegie Hill Historic District, Manhattan**

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

The Victorian Society does not typically support the installation of HVAC equipment extending from the front of storefronts. We do so in this instance for unique reasons.

One of our committee members is familiar with this building and concurs with the applicant that this store is “landlocked” and has no access to a rear yard or other unobtrusive location for an HVAC unit. An alternative that would install a grille for an interior unit would require making openings in historic stone cladding, an inappropriate solution.

We are pleased to see that the bulkier of the two existing units can be removed. This will allow the proposed new awning to approximate the design and slope of historic retractable awnings and is a substantial improvement over the existing awning. We therefore support this application.

***Approved 8-0, with staff to explore mesh panels at sides of awning.***