

**Victorian Society Testimony for February 11, 2025: 184 7th Avenue South (LPC-25-03324); 261 11th Avenue (aka 261-279 11th Avenue, 220-238 12th Avenue, 601-651 West 27th Street, and 600-654 West 28th Street) (LPC-24-06372); 893 Broadway (LPC-25-04503); 120 Riverside Drive and 125 Riverside Drive (LPC-25-02231 and LPC-24-04259); 222 West 79th Street (LPC-24-07356); Verdi Square Scenic Landmark (LPC-25-06032)**

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

**LPC-25-03324 -- 184 7th Avenue South - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan**

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

Had we reviewed them prior to construction, we would have supported without modification the minimal changes that were made to this little remnant of a building. The paint color is appropriate, the retractable awning is typical of what's been on the building for years, and the mural is quirky yet unobtrusive. It all seems very characteristic of the Village, and we therefore support legalization.

***Approved 8-0.***

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

**LPC-24-06372 -- 261 11th Avenue (aka 261-279 11th Avenue, 220-238 12th Avenue, 601-651 West 27th Street, and 600-654 West 28th Street) - West Chelsea Historic District, Manhattan**

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

Given the history of painted signs on this and other industrial buildings in New York City, the Victorian Society supports a change to the master plan to allow a painted sign at the main, monumental arch of the west facade to identify the new first floor tenant. We agree with Community Board 4, however, that the poor condition of the brickwork, including loss of mortar and bad repointing, should be corrected pursuant to an LPC permit before any additional or altered signs are installed.

These long brick facades displayed various large signs over the years, and we support new painted signage, including in a location on the upper right west facade. We do not, however, think it's appropriate to light this new sign for a single tenant. There is already too much distraction from this historic façade caused by the highly visible rooftop addition. A master plan for façade lighting would be useful in association with the sign master plan, but we find a separate spotlight on the sign at the upper wall to be inappropriate. The new sign should be painted or track mounted, but should not consist of pin mounted letters, which cause too much damage to the integrity of the brickwork.

***Approved with modifications 8-0: letters on rail option not approved and font style for tenant sign at the tunnel arch to match building identification font.***

***Approximate time: 12:00; join Zoom by: 11:00***

**LPC-25-04503 -- 893 Broadway - Ladies' Mile Historic District, Manhattan**

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

Securing a flagpole to a historic and finely detailed cast-iron façade goes against all tenets of historic preservation. Beyond that, this application lacks the basic information required to make an informed decision. And we feel that the Commission's bracket sign rules offer an appropriate solution.

The best features of 19<sup>th</sup> century cast iron are visible at 893 Broadway. The castings are beautifully detailed. They've survived intact for 150 years. Cast iron's strength allows for elegant, slender supports. But cast iron also has inherent drawbacks. It's a brittle material, and once there's water infiltration, it can rot from the inside. Flags and flagpoles move slightly every time the wind blows and stress the material. Attaching one to historic cast iron is a recipe for destruction and should always be prohibited.

This presentation is inadequate. The applicants haven't provided real installation details. There are no close-up photos showing the location of the proposed flagpole. They do reference a previous flagpole which received an LPC violation and was removed. The holes for this installation are still visible, though not in the applicant's presentation material. We don't know if the applicant intends to re-use these holes or would drill additional holes. Many flagpoles, including at least half the ones shown in the applicant's photos, have a side brace. The applicant has provided no information on that, or where, if a side brace is required, it will be attached.

Finally, this is a very tall storefront with modern infill. A bracket sign--or a flagpole--could be attached to that modern window or storefront infill rather than the cast iron.

***Approved with modifications 8-0: work with staff on location and size of flagpole and banner and repairs to cast iron from previous pole mount.***

*lunch*

***Approximate time: 12:45; join Zoom by: 11:45***

**LPC-25-02231 -- 120 Riverside Drive - Riverside - West End Historic District Extension I, Manhattan and LPC-24-04259 -- 125 Riverside Drive - Riverside - West End Historic District Extension I, Manhattan**

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

We see here a generous and public-spirited proposal for restoration of the unusual latticework parapets on these buildings. We wholeheartedly support and applaud it. We also support the use of Micro-cotta as a substitute for the original terra cotta. Micro-cotta and terra cotta are similar in composition and appearance. That, and the distance from the street and the extreme exposure of the installation, make this an appropriate material choice.

The proposed rooftop additions will be partially obscured by the new parapets, but still visible through and above them. Overall, however, it's our view that the changes are appropriate and will benefit both the buildings and the historic district.

***Approved with modifications 7-0: applicant to work with staff to more closely replicate dimensions and details of the parapets as determined from historic photos.***

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

**LPC-24-07356 - 222 West 79th Street - Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District – Manhattan – February 11, 2025**

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

This application has two components. The Victorian Society supports the proposed enlargement of the existing penthouse. It's modestly scaled, and where it will be visible from the west it will be seen in conjunction with much larger buildings. It's almost an illustration of "modestly visible." It will have minimal effect upon any of the significant architectural features of this building.

We do not support the second component of this application, legalization of the areaway sign. The fact that there was a smaller sign mounted on posts standing in the areaway at designation is irrelevant, as it lost its grandfathered status when it was removed by a previous tenant. The sign which is there now is larger and more obtrusive than that grandfathered sign. It conceals a portion of the historic stoop. It's physically anchored to the side wall of the neighbor's stoop. And it bears no relationship to any type of historic signage which might be found on a building constructed in 1894.

It's a bit of a challenge to design an appropriate sign for a basement business in a row house. But the existing sign is not the answer, and it should be denied.

Thank you, commissioners.

***Approved with modifications 7-0: work with staff on size and attachment of sign and to improve its relationship to the building's architecture.***

**Approximate time: 2:45; join Zoom by: 1:45**

**LPC-25-06032 -- Verdi Square - Scenic Landmark, Manhattan**

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

Verdi Square is the smallest of our 12 scenic landmarks. It was designated for its presence as a quiet, planted, foreground to the individual landmark Central Savings Bank across 73<sup>rd</sup> Street, making for an elegant and urbane ensemble.

Many cycles of restoration and neglect have characterized Verdi Square. Its 1960s nickname, *Needle Park*, was brought to the world's attention with the 1971 movie *Panic in Needle Park*. In an act of courage and hope, the Commission designated the park in 1975. But by 2018 it had a new nickname--*Vermin Square*--due to the hundreds of rats living in its neglected and overgrown plantings. The founding of Friends of Verdi Square in 2019 finally provided the volunteer resources to clear out, replant, and to this day, maintain the scenic landmark.

The Parks Department's presentation is poorly done and deceptive. Renderings of the proposed asphalt walk show it the same width as the three-foot-wide entrance gates, but the plan indicates it will actually be five feet wide. There is a change in grade between the perimeter sidewalk and the interior that isn't addressed. The presentation includes nice pictures of other parks with no discernable relevance to this application. It includes a picture of a single type of proposed shrub with no indication of where it will be planted. Neither is there any plan to remediate the extensive disturbance that would be caused by the path and water line construction. Will it be left to the volunteer group to redo much of their hard work?

The large backflow preventer enclosure pictured on slide 26 doesn't match the dimensions shown on slide 28. This box is crudely photoshopped into slide 25, falsely minimizing its visual disruptiveness just a few feet from the Verdi Monument. It will actually be twice as large as the trash can visible on that slide. A second, similar above grade electrical meter box, not shown, will likely be added, as the backflow preventer requires electric heat.

We don't understand how such a deficient presentation could have been allowed out of the Parks Department or why the Landmarks Commission would accept it as a complete application.

As designed, the so-called accessible path offers only a shortcut between the west and north gates. Access to the seats and tables would require crossing a steel edging and the unstabilized gravel surface of the sitting area. This hard asphalt walk surface would

inappropriately formalize what was intended to be an informal, irregular, gravel-surfaced seating area within a garden landscape. A much better solution would be to use an invisible grid mat under the gravel to make the entire seating area stable and accessible while maintaining its informality.

The scenic landmark constitutes a small part of the open space around the subway entrance. With all this available undesignated space, we're puzzled at the decision to locate the backflow preventer within the scenic landmark. More puzzling is the failure to make use of two existing hose bibs on the exterior of the station building. These were intended to provide water for the plaza and plantings, one of them being just two feet from the west planting bed. If the MTA has been reluctant to allow use of this water source, perhaps a call by the Parks, or even the Landmarks commissioner to an appropriate colleague at MTA would solve this problem and avoid the cost, disruption, and visual intrusiveness of the proposed backflow preventer and waterline installation.

If even this is too much to ask, we note that a Parks Department food service kiosk is located just 10 feet from the scenic landmark. It has water service, and a quick and inexpensive modification could bring a hose bib to the back of that structure, with easy access to Verdi Square.

*See four pictures below.*



*The blue arrow shows the hose bib box on the north side of the new station entrance. This is immediately adjacent to the west planting bed, on the right. There is a second hose bib on the south side, closer to the scenic landmark part of the site.*





*Close up of the box, clearly labeled "WATER."*



*Hose bib on the south side of the station building.  
The missing cover shows the standard hose connection  
And valve. This hose bib is 40 feet from the scenic landmark.*





*Parks' food service kiosk, which has a water supply. A simple and inexpensive alteration could add a hose bib to the back of the kiosk on the left, facing the Verdi Square planting bed, just 10 feet away.*

**Laid over.**