

**Victorian Society Testimony for March 11, 2025: 221 and 223 Waverly Avenue (LPC-25-04842 and LPC-25-04843) (public meeting items); 207 West 151st Street - Harlem River Houses (LPC-25-07290); 167 West 72nd Street (LPC-24-0875)**

*The testimony for public meeting items 1 and 2 is not to be read; it's being submitted in written form.*

**Public Meeting Items 1 and 2**

**LPC-25-04842 -- 221 Waverly Avenue and LPC-25-04843 -- 223 Waverly Avenue – Clinton Hill Historic District, Brooklyn**

The December 17, 2024 Public Hearing for these two applications was both interesting and memorable. We'd been impressed with the thoughtful nature of each commissioner's comments. All of those who spoke felt the buildings didn't work in the context of this block, and many suggestions were offered, covering all aspects of the design, including scale, details, and materials.

Specific recommendations included:

Re-working the ground floor, originally shorter than the other floors, so that it didn't feel "slammed" into the ground. It was acknowledged that zoning doesn't allow garages here, but participants felt the applicants needed to look at the adjacent carriage houses to create better entrances.

Modifying the size of the window openings on each floor to reflect the typical parti where window sizes diminish as the floors rise.

Strengthening the separation between the two houses and differentiating their detailing to break down the overall impression of bulk.

Using changes of materials and color to break down the impression of bulk.

And reducing the overall height to better relate to the low carriage houses and garages which are predominant on the block, rather than trying to match the height of the rowhouse facing Willoughby Avenue.

But when we looked at the revised proposal, we saw that the applicants had decided to ignore most of these comments and go for what is literally the "low-hanging fruit" – adjustments to the entrances on the ground floor. There is no change to the overall height or massing, the window sizes above the ground floor, and no apparent effort to differentiate using materials or details, except for the cladding on the bulkheads. We are being presented with buildings which are almost identical to what was shown in December.

Significant revisions must be made along the lines requested by the commissioners and testimony before this proposal can begin to be appropriate.

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*Below is our original testimony presented on Dec. 17, 2024.*

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

When we first began our review of this project for two new buildings, it seemed the applicants had done their homework. They've looked at buildings in the district. They've provided excellent photos of carefully detailed modern buildings which have been approved by the Commission. They've given us clear pictures of historic carriage houses, including the pair of beautifully detailed Beaux Arts buildings at 237-239 Waverly which were declared "splendid" in the designation report. Studying those two buildings, and the way the architects Escher & Evans balanced plain brick with limestone carvings, punched openings with recessed doors, and wide copper bands of flashing with smooth slate, could be a lesson in the ways to create a small building which has infinite panache for those who really pay attention.

Unfortunately, these architects seem to have decided not to pay attention to all the information they gathered. The silhouette of this very visible pair of buildings suggests a carriage house, but one on steroids. It's at least a story too tall. The buildings would be set so low into the ground that the first floor has a stumpy appearance, seemingly sinking into the ground. They would be tightly wrapped in a material which has more novelty value than historic resonance.

There are too many underdeveloped elements here for us to give individual suggestions. This project needs to be completely re-thought. It doesn't work as a building of good contemporary or traditional design, or as a background building.

Thank you, commissioners.

***Approved 6-0, as modified (minor) from original design.***

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

**LPC-25-07290 -- 207 West 151st Street - Harlem River Houses - Individual Landmark, Manhattan**

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

We choose to comment on this post-Victorian housing development because of its social, historical, and architectural importance and because we want to express our strong support and appreciation for the proposed work. First, however, we want to point out the spectacular effect of the new multilight casement windows that closely replicate the originals. These new windows replaced inappropriate double-hung windows. What a difference they make! This is a lesson in the importance of retaining or replicating original window designs on historic buildings of any style. An application later today, for 167 West 72<sup>nd</sup> Street, will give the Commission an opportunity to apply this lesson.

The proposed restoration of important original artwork at the complex is commendable. The new sculptures and murals proposed are well sited and scaled to the site and are in the spirit of its original artwork. They will be appropriate additions.

Finally, the simple design of the proposed interpretive signs is appropriate stylistically to this Modern-style housing development, and the porcelain enamel finish is the most legible and durable available. We haven't reviewed individual locations, but from what we can see the signs are well placed and won't overwhelm the site. Most importantly, the information they provide will help residents and visitors understand the history and importance of Harlem River Houses and hopefully develop pride in place. This kind of information is too scarce at historic sites in the city.

***Approved 6-0.***

***Approximate time: 1:30; join Zoom by: 12:30***

**LPC-24-0875 -- 167 West 72nd Street - Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, Manhattan**

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

Historic tax photographs of 167 West 72<sup>nd</sup> Street show that this building had nine-over-one wood windows on the upper floors. These windows almost surely date from the 1909 alteration that gave the house a neo-Federal style façade. Nine-over-one windows are stylistically correct for a neo-Federal rowhouse and were an intentional part of the redesign. We therefore recommend that the illegal windows be replaced with nine-over-one wood sash that match the 1909 windows and support the historic style of the building.

In investigating the history of Commission activity concerning this building, we were extremely disappointed to discover that Notice of Violation 06-0651, issued for the “replacement of windows at the front façade without permit(s)” was dated June 26, 2006. It’s been outstanding for 19 years.

We were just as disturbed to see that four other Notices of Violation have been issued against the property since 2010; that the violations are all still in effect; that since 2016 staff has deactivated or withdrawn six applications; and that on March 4, 2025, last week, a Certificate of No Effect was issued to correct one of the them, issued for the installation of signage in 2010.

Commissioners, these windows are inappropriate in terms of style and materials. They have been in place for 19 years. As the building has many other violations not being addressed by this application, we think the owners should be required to return with a fully detailed presentation for the installation of multi-light, painted wood windows. This application for legalization should be denied.

***Laid over: applicant did not appear.***