

Victorian Society testimony for April 22, 2025: 27 Cranberry Street (LPC-25-06535); 18 East 50th Street - Hampton Shops Building (LPC-25-08914); Central Park - Central Park Scenic Landmark (LPC-25-08909) and 1000 Fifth Avenue - Metropolitan Museum of Art - Individual and Interior Landmark (LPC-25-08226)

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

LPC-25-06535 -- 27 Cranberry Street - Brooklyn Heights Historic District, Brooklyn

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We are generally supportive of this proposal, with a couple of reservations. Using a historic carriage house to inform the ground floor design is a clever way to incorporate a garage into a building that isn't otherwise a carriage house. We wouldn't like to see this become a common scheme, as there's a danger of creating an urban version of suburban tract houses whose garages are their most prominent features.

The window openings on this house would be some of the largest on the street and may contribute to the feeling that the building is dwarfing its neighbors, especially the little frame house next door. At first, the cornice seemed too small for the building, but upon reflection, we feel that using corbeled brick to terminate the front façade, rather than a more typical cornice, will be an interesting variation without calling attention to itself. Despite these few concerns, which perhaps can be addressed, we find the design appropriate.

Approved 9-0, with applicant to work with staff to refine details and dimensions of the cornice and the size and proportions of the party wall windows.

lunch

Approximate time: 1:00; join Zoom by: 12:00

LPC-25-08914 -- 18 East 50th Street - Hampton Shops Building Individual Landmark

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We oppose this large and highly visible rooftop addition on an individual landmark whose design emphasizes its neo-Gothic rooftop termination. Any addition should be set back further and should not appear to be part of this building. It should be made to blend into the sides and roofscapes of the surrounding buildings.

We also think the proposed marquee is inappropriate. It has no stylistic relationship to the building. It appears to have flown in from elsewhere and stuck itself onto the gothic arch. Similar marquees shown as precedents are, we feel, equally inappropriate to their own buildings, perhaps despite having received Commission approval.

The entrance to this building was originally deeply recessed. A better solution for protection from weather, and one that would also help restore the building instead of adding something new to it, would be to recreate the historic entrance by deeply recessing the doors.

Rooftop addition approved 9-0; no action on canopy: return with refinements.

Approximate time: 2:00; join Zoom by: 1:00

**LPC-25-08909 -- Central Park - Central Park Scenic Landmark and LPC-25-08226 --
1000 Fifth Avenue - Metropolitan Museum of Art - Individual and Interior Landmark,
Manhattan**

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

It's interesting to note that the historic buildings that are part of the Met, going back to the original Calvert Vaux building, have been adapted many times and continue to be used by the museum. Yet one of its newest buildings was apparently so poorly designed and inflexible that it's to be demolished, an enormous waste of resources. What are the assurances that the new wing is being designed in a way that it won't meet the same fate in 40 years?

The Roche/Dinkeloo master plan, which this addition violates, was intended to create a unified, park-facing western façade. The large areas of exposed glass of the Roche buildings are intended to recall historic museum skylights and the greenhouses that were original to Central Park. We question whether the master plan in the end resulted in a successful and harmonious relationship with the park landscape. And we acknowledge that the symmetry and unity of the western façade aren't easily discernable from within the park in some seasons.

Nevertheless, we think there is value in retaining the symmetry and essential outlines of the existing building in accordance with the approved and completed Roche/Dinkeloo master plan. We do not think it appropriate to introduce a completely new design in one corner, unrelated to anything else on the building, and not part of any plan to produce a coherent, unified façade which has an appropriate and subservient relationship to the Central Park landscape.

The applicant states that the new wing "enhances visual connections to Central Park." Stating this compatibility doesn't make it so. Despite maintaining the footprint of the existing wing, the proposed wing is far bulkier and will be much more visible from within the park. We see nothing about the massing or detailing that relates successfully to a 19th century English Romantic style park. Perhaps the applicant is referring to the fact that the park can be seen from many of the windows and terraces on the new wing. But that is the wrong focus. In a scenic landmark, how the building is seen from the park is the more important consideration. A large amount of planting is proposed to obscure the new wing. This says to us that there's something wrong with the architecture's relationship to the park.

By the way, many mature trees, including elms, are proposed for removal, a fact that receives almost no attention in this massive, 176 slide presentation.

We note finally that the new wing appears to include no "back of house" space for conservation work and exhibit preparation. Additionally, few details are provided of the new "museum loading access" route to the west facade, which seems to be how artworks for this wing will come and go. A new, straight, 12 foot wide drivable grass path is proposed. These rarely work in practice. And there appear to be no provisions for truck turnarounds, security, unpacking, or handling of artworks that will presumably be crated and will enter directly into the public exhibit areas from the outside.

We're concerned that additional interventions will be needed at this new entrance, as well as physical additions to the new wing, to accommodate these typical museum activities which presently seem unaccounted for. Such interventions are likely to be visually problematic, but as they will affect critical museum operations, the Commission is unlikely to be able to deny them. Therefore, the Museum should address these operational issues now.

Landscape changes approved 8-0: positive advisory report to be issued, with suggestion to improve ability of park users to engage with the new building.

Demolition of L.A. Wallace Wing and construction of new Tang Wing approved 8-0.