

Victorian Society Testimony for June 9, 2026: 188 Duffield Street (aka 182-188 Duffield Street) - Duffield Street Houses - Individual Landmark (LPC-25-04617); 265 Cumberland Street (LPC-26-09457); 1 Hanson Place - Williamsburgh Savings Bank (Hanson Place) - Individual and Interior Landmark (LPC-26-10263); 144 Spring Street (LPC-26-10512); 402 West 21st Street (LPC-26-10584); 125 East 64th Street (LPC-26-05686)

Public Meeting Item No. 4 (*Not to be read aloud*)

LPC-25-04617 -- 188 Duffield Street (aka 182-188 Duffield Street) - Duffield Street Houses - Individual Landmark, Brooklyn

This fourth attempt is no better than the first three. Minor changes to the tower and the courtyard don't begin to address the significant preservation issues posed by this project. The lack of responsiveness of the applicant is likely due in large part to the fact that the commissioners have focused their discussions on minor details like spandrel color, tower setbacks, and quality of the glass wall at the courtyard. The real issues here are very different, and no amount of design tweaking can resolve them. They are:

1. The proposed COMPLETE DEMOLITION of one of the four designated houses.
2. The significant alterations to the other houses, including removal of historic rear extensions and construction of interior windowless walls at the back, leaving the rear walls as false screens, likely made of entirely new material.
3. The presence of an enormous tower jammed against the rear of the houses, filling their backyards, giving them no breathing room and forever altering their context.
4. The difficulty of constructing a building like this without damaging the historic buildings, given extremely limited access and immediate adjacency to the historic buildings.
5. The implications for environmental regulation under city, state, and federal environmental laws, whereby the houses were relocated to a site with an appropriate context similar to their original site, restored, were to be put to appropriately compatible uses, and to be forever protected, including significant interior as well as exterior features. These mitigations, agreed to by all levels of government and the Landmarks Commission, do not expire and run with the property, not the owner.

The commissioners have not yet addressed these important preservation issues in their public discussions of this application. We request that they do so.

Approved 8-1 (Goldblum) with applicant to work with staff on the glass "courtyard" curtain wall.

Approximate time: 11:20; join Zoom by: 10:20

LPC-26-09457 -- 265 Cumberland Street - Fort Greene Historic District, Brooklyn

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

The Victorian Society supports this proposed redesign. In scale and detail, we think the proposed building is a better fit for the district and gives the building a presence among its neighbors that the existing design lacks.

We're a bit concerned about the proposed use of "thin brick" over the existing masonry. It reminds us too much of the era of Formstone or Permastone. But as this building isn't historic, perhaps it doesn't matter.

We also recommend that a different solution be found to the large trash enclosure at the property line. It's awkwardly placed in relation to the nicely detailed façade.

Approved 8-0, with modifications. Staff to work with applicant to resolve the composition of the Mansard roof in relation to the floors below and resolve detailing of thin brick veneer (with a mockup) and or consider full depth brick.

Approximate time: 11:40; join Zoom by: 10:40

LPC-26-10263 -- 1 Hanson Place - Williamsburgh Savings Bank (Hanson Place) - Individual and Interior Landmark, Brooklyn

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

We would love to see this magnificent space put to use and opened to the public. But a proposal such as this one is inappropriate. In fact, we can hardly think of a less appropriate plan for an interior landmark.

This proposal would remove significant historic features and would cover others. The bar in the center of the floor has no design relationship to the space. Most critically, the mezzanines would obscure significant features and completely change the way the cathedral-like space is experienced. The unique feature of an interior landmark, like a scenic landmark, is that it's about space, how space is perceived in three dimensions, and the experience of moving through it, as much as it's about surfaces.

In our view, the only way a proposal like this could even be seriously considered is to require an escrow. This would have to fully fund and mandate restoration of the space to its pre-existing condition upon departure of the proposed tenant. No extensions and no modifications by a new tenant allowed, only full restoration.

Even then, we doubt that we could support the extent of the changes proposed, which would have no time limit.

No action; reduce mezzanine, review bar placement, consider electric kitchens and reduced infrastructure they require.

lunch

Approximate time: 1:50; join Zoom by: 12:50

LPC-26-10512 -- 144 Spring Street - SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, Manhattan

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

The VSNY does not support this proposal. We would be happy to see a building on this site, a parking lot since designation. But, after reviewing this design and the examples of previously approved buildings shown, it seems the applicant believes that the only appropriate 21st century building which could be added to an historic district is a slightly embellished glass box. We strongly disagree.

The parti for any new building in this district should include a strong base, bulkheads, large display windows with transoms with an articulated metal structure. The base should be masonry tall enough to raise the metal framework above snow and salt. The upper floors, which can't be used as display windows by most merchants, do not need to be full height and should have transoms.

We appreciate the visible framing being proposed, but the lacy UHPC perforated infill screen is not appropriate at the base, the second floor, or as cresting. The applicant has provided pictures of historic perforated panels. However, these were typically used as infill in front of solid material. They are used sparingly. They are not used against the sky.

We do not find the proposed details well integrated into the UHPC material in the way detail is found in historic cast iron. The perforated panels bear no relationship to the rectangular framework.

Finally, the applicant must provide samples of the UHPC in the actual designs proposed, including the perforated panels and the impressed designs in the columns, so that the material can be properly assessed. These samples should be provided prior to a vote on the appropriateness of the proposal.

Thank you, commissioners.

No action. General support, but investigate hierarchy of ornament, a strengthened lower base, consider modifying lacy design to be more in keeping with the thickness of the material, signs, reduce presence of roof bulkhead.

Approximate time: 2:30; join Zoom by: 1:30

LPC-26-10584 -- 402 West 21st Street - Chelsea Historic District, Manhattan

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

The Victorian Society does not support this application to replace what appear to be historic one-over-one double hung wood windows with a hybrid window. As we've noted before, we believe that if windows cannot be repaired, replacement windows should match in terms of configuration, operation, materials, details and finish. We also do not believe the possible energy savings provided, after the existing windows are destroyed and hauled away, and after the proposed windows are manufactured, delivered and installed, is in keeping with the preservation mandate of the LPC.

Restoration and weather stripping, along with the use of interior storm windows, should be considered for energy savings as a first step before replacements are proposed.

Finally, we must note that that the applicant hasn't provided close-up pictures of the historic windows. The sections show them as wood which would have a painted finish. We must also note that the large, 3rd floor Gothic window and the other special leaded glass windows are noted as not in the scope of the application. They are not drawn with these historic details in either the existing or proposed elevations and perspective drawings. Are there plans to restore these special, historic windows?

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 7-0.

Approximate time: 3:10; join Zoom by: 2:10

LPC-26-05686 -- 125 East 64th Street - Upper East Side Historic District, Manhattan

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

In our view this rowhouse retains no stylistic features that help determine what window configuration would be appropriate. If it had remnants of its neo-Grec origins, one-over-one windows would be appropriate. If its 20th century redesign had been more convincingly neo-Federal, Georgian, or Colonial Revival, six-over-six windows would be correct.

Under these circumstances, we suggest an approach based on aesthetics rather than style. The applicant has done that by proposing windows whose divisions work well with the existing parlor and top floor windows to remain. We think it is appropriate as is.

However, we also agree with idea of the Historic Districts Council that a configuration of a transom above two-over-two sash would result in a glass pane size more closely matching the existing windows that are remaining. The replacement windows could be either paired casements or single hung, with the lower sash sliding up behind the transom.

Approved 6-0.