

Victorian Society Testimony for July 21, 2026: 491 Broadway, SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District (LPC-26-04118); 211 East 62nd Street - Treadwell Farm Historic District (LPC-26-07056); 1 Hanson Place - Williamsburgh Savings Bank (Hanson Place) - Individual and Interior Landmark (LPC-26-10263) (*public meeting*); Prospect Park Restroom Building, 176 Parkside Avenue - Prospect Park - Scenic Landmark (LPC-26-04034)

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

LPC-26-04118 -- 491 Broadway, SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, Manhattan

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. The Commission is being asked to do three things in this proposal: 1) modify and legalize 9th floor window replacement at the Broadway façade carried out without LPC approval; 2) legalize replacement of four double-hung windows with two larger double-hung windows at a visible rear and side facade; and 3) approve removal of what appear to be historic wood double-hung windows at the Broome Street façade and replacement with simulated double-hung windows.

None of this work is appropriate. On the first point, granting retroactive approval for unauthorized work sends a corrosive signal to every property owner in the historic districts in this city that the approval process is optional, and that the Commission will ultimately validate rather than reverse unauthorized alterations. The double-hung window is one of the most recognizable features of the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District. When these existing windows require upgrading, the appropriate remedy is in-kind replacement, not substitution with a different fenestration profile. The proposal to glue aluminum strips on the glass is silly.

At the visible rear façade, substituting two larger double-hung windows for the original four disrupted the pattern that appears to exist on every other floor of this façade. And at the Broome Street façade the proposed windows should replicate the double-hung operation of the originals. The justification that these hybrid windows look like double-hung windows except when they're open would be fine if it's guaranteed that they'll never be open.

We urge the Commission to deny this application and require that the unauthorized 9th floor windows be removed and replaced with double-hung windows, consistent with the building's historic condition; that the rear façade windows be replaced with four double-hung windows to match the historic condition; and that the Broome Street windows be restored if they are indeed historic or replaced in kind.

No action: work with window manufacturer to determine what alterations are possible.

Lunch

Approximate time: 1:20; join Zoom by: 12:20

LPC-26-07056 -- 211 East 62nd Street - Treadwell Farm Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. The VSNY recommends denial of most aspects of this proposal. We find that the design, materials and details of the proposed doors and balcony railing, stylistically similar to those found on the great Beaux Arts mansions along Fifth Avenue, are inappropriate for the more modestly scaled rowhouses in the Treadwell Farm Historic District. We must also note that several of the photos of historic ironwork the applicant has provided are of buildings in the Upper East Side Historic District or the Extension, including all those shown on Board 8. The handsome iron gates in image 2, Board 7, are part of Trinity Baptist Church, not a rowhouse.

Several aspects of the proposal seem especially unsuitable. These include the use of bronze for the doors. If you go back to the photos the applicant has provided you'll see that all of the railings are black painted metal. We were able to review 100 permits issued for work in this district since 2016. Only 4 included new railings, but all 4 were black painted metal.

You'll also see that much of the ironwork in this district was significantly altered in the early 20th century when many houses lost their stoops and were remodeled in a neo-Regency style. The existing balcony railing at 211 East 62, with its three Adam-style oval elements, appears to date from this period. It is so clearly in keeping with the ironwork on adjacent rowhouses that we must urge the Commission to require the applicant to retain the balcony railing.

However, we would not object to the removal of the two existing glass and iron entrance doors if something more appropriate were to be proposed. We find the existing doors to be unsympathetic to the delicate ironwork of the existing balcony railing, and to the overall character of the Treadwell Farm Historic District. If there is a security problem which requires their replacement, we urge the applicant to study the railing and other metalwork inside the district to develop a design more in keeping with the character of this house.

Finally, we were delighted to learn that Eleanor Roosevelt had an apartment at 211 in the 1950s. Perhaps the former first lady actually knew that balcony.

Approved 7-0 with modifications: ironwork at balcony to be retained and restored; if not restorable replaced in kind; ironwork doors to match existing or be similar in material and design. [This is essentially a denial.]

Public Meeting Item No. 1

Approximate time: 1:40

LPC-26-10263 -- 1 Hanson Place - Williamsburgh Savings Bank (Hanson Place) - Individual and Interior Landmark - Brooklyn Academy of Music Historic District, Brooklyn

We see very little meaningful change in this revised proposal. The work would remove significant historic features and would cover others. The center bar structures obscure the floor pattern and interrupt the grand space. Most critically, the mezzanines would obscure significant features and completely change the way the cathedral-like space is experienced. Although portions of the new mezzanine structures have been pulled back, their geometry in some ways makes them more obtrusive than before. 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.

We also object to the fact that this presentation includes almost no comparative views of the proposed design with the existing condition, instead comparing the two proposals. This will lead the discussion towards a comparison of the minor changes between the two designs, rather than focusing where it should, on the very major changes to the existing, original design of the designated interior.

Approved 8-0 as modified.

Public Meeting Item No. 3

Approximate time: 2:40

**LPC-26-04034 – Prospect Park Restroom Building, 176 Parkside Avenue - Prospect Park
- Scenic Landmark, Brooklyn**

This is a completely different proposal from the one seen at the public hearing of Nov. 25, 2025. As such, we feel it should be calendared as a public hearing to allow for meaningful testimony by the community, and we request that the Commission hold such a hearing or open the public meeting to allow for public testimony. Fairness dictates that if the hearing is opened to allow the applicant to present what is essentially a new design, the public should be able to testify on that design as well.

The most seriously inappropriate part of the previous proposal—the attached pergola—has thankfully been removed from the application, though we will have to deal with that problematic proposal at a future hearing. The elements of the current proposal that will restore this modest Classical building are fine. However, the loss of the steps at both entrances is unfortunate. The steps help give the building what little presence it has. We suggest that the accessible path can lead to an expanded platform at the entrance. This platform could accommodate the access path at the side and allow the steps to remain. This might reduce the amount of retaining wall necessary.

That retaining wall itself is also problematic. There are two appropriate approaches to this landscape change. One is to construct a wall that is architecturally part of the building: symmetrical and Classical. The other is to address the grade change with plantings and boulders or other rustic and picturesque work that's typical of the park's original design. The proposed bench/retaining wall structure is a design that in its form and detail might be found in any modern landscape. It's neither fish nor fowl; it doesn't relate well either to the small Classical building or the picturesque nature of the park's historic landscape.

Approved 7-0.