

Victorian Society Testimony for August 18, 2026: 375 Lafayette Street - NoHo Historic District Extension (LPC-26-07016); 1181 Broadway - Madison Square North Historic District (LPC-26-10002); 673 Madison Avenue - Upper East Side Historic District (LPC-26-10605); 1901 Avenue H - Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic District (LPC-26-10159); 233 Mott Street - Old St. Patrick's Convent and Girls' School - Individual Landmark (LPC-26-11277); 894-900 Broadway - Ladies' Mile Historic District (LPC-26-09744); 155 West 72nd Street - Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District (LPC-26-07557)

Approximate time: 10:15

Public Meeting Item No. 2

LPC-26-07016 -- 375 Lafayette Street - NoHo Historic District Extension, Manhattan

The revisions made by the applicant—changing the façade color and modifying a few details-- do not begin to address the problem with this proposed development. The buildings are not appropriate in height or massing to the character of the Noho Historic District. The applicants went to great lengths to describe in words why these buildings are appropriate and contextual in scale to the district. Yet practically every image they showed put the lie to that point of view. It's important to remember that the allowable zoning envelope is irrelevant to historic and architectural appropriateness as defined in the Landmarks Law.

Any proposal of this scale in a historic district consisting mostly of smaller buildings should be required to be exemplary in design and harmonious with the district's historic buildings, no matter what the style of the new building. This proposal is neither exemplary nor harmonious.

The design and materiality references to neighboring historic buildings such as 670 Broadway and 399 Lafayette are reduced in these proposed buildings to a monotonous detailing, which seems to extend forever down the block. That, and the massive scale of the proposed buildings detracts from the efforts to establish a sense of cohesion with the existing buildings. We suggest that anyone looking at these buildings, should they be built, could not guess that they are looking at a historic district, or at buildings that were subject to any sort of design review intended to maintain human scale or neighborhood cohesion.

The existing historic buildings that are larger have of course the great richness of detail, materiality, and articulation that makes them historic. That's why they're designated and why they are appropriate and fitting to the context of the historic district. These buildings include none of these kinds of features.

This proposal would greatly disrupt the character of the neighborhood. These buildings would overwhelm the nearby early nineteenth century commercial buildings and Federal style row houses, which are significantly smaller in scale. The height of these new buildings needs to be decreased and the articulation of the façade increased to break down its scale. In fact, a full rethinking of the design approach is needed.

Approved 6-2 (Goldblum, Jefferson)-1 (Chen)

Approximate time: 11:15

Public Meeting Item No. 3

LPC-26-10002 -- 1181 Broadway - Madison Square North Historic District, Manhattan

The Victorian Society is happy to see most of the proposed changes at 1181 Broadway.

On June 23, 2026, at the initial public hearing, we testified in support of the alterations to the ground floor, including the replacement of the storefront infill, and the addition of a modestly scaled canopy above the entrance to the upper floors. We also supported the small rear yard addition in the south-west corner of the plot. Although it will be visible from the street, as shown on image 38, this rear corner is so minimally detailed, the addition will have no effect on the overall appearance of the building.

And we supported the removal of several modern rooftop accretions, including three sheds clad in a “three-little-pigs” selection of materials - brick, concrete block and aluminum siding.

But although the proposed rooftop additions have been modified to preserve more significant historic material, we believe that the rooftop addition, shown on Drawing 4, is still one story too tall. Reducing it by an additional story would give greater prominence to the unique corner pavilion which crowns this building.

Approved 9-0 with modifications: top floor of rooftop addition to be eliminated or substantially set back; façade of addition to be simplified.

Approximate time: 12:15; join Zoom by: 11:15

LPC-26-10605 -- 673 Madison Avenue - Upper East Side Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. When it reviews proposals for architectural lighting, the Commission regularly notes that it does not regulate light levels, effects, or quality. Instead, it regulates only the presence and visibility of lighting hardware and conduit and the effect the installation would have on the physical fabric of the building or structure. It's explained that it would be too hard to regulate lighting quality. The result of this regulatory policy, taken to the extreme, is evident in this proposal. Combining the lighting proposed today with the lighting approved by the staff, the effect on this ordinary brownstone rowhouse would be overwhelming. We understand the owner's desire to show off the restoration work that is underway, but the proposed lighting scheme is not appropriate for this type of building and would be a distraction both to it and to the surrounding historic district as well as a bad precedent. Once installed, given the Commission's current policy, there would be nothing to prevent the owner from using colored, flashing, moving, or pulsating lights.

We are concerned that this presentation shows a nighttime perspective view of the lighting effects only for the cornice lighting. This is deceptive. If lighting effects are being considered, the full lighting scheme should be illustrated. On the other hand, if the Commission is considering only hardware and not lighting effects, this perspective view shouldn't be included in the presentation.

We also think it isn't a good idea to weld the fixture attachment plates to the sheet metal cornice. This work would be difficult to reverse without damaging the cornice and the act of welding galvanized metal may make it more susceptible to rusting. And we note the difficulty in accessing all of these fixtures for repairs. LED lamps are long lasting, but they do malfunction. Random outages in a scheme like this would introduce aesthetic disharmony.

Even if it were possible to find that the attachments could be made without damage and that the visibility of the fixtures is acceptable, we urge denial of this application because of the visually distracting effects of the lighting scheme. Aesthetics are under the purview of the Commission—the Landmarks Law's purpose and declaration of public policy say so. Architectural lighting can have a significant aesthetic impact on buildings and districts and must be considered in reviewing appropriateness. The lighting proposed here is excessive and will adversely affect the perception of the building and district.

Approved 6-3 (Jefferson, Mahan, Chu) -1 (Ginsburg)

lunch

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

**LPC-26-10159 -- 1901 Avenue H - Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic District,
Brooklyn**

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

The VSNY has no objection to the installation of a metal fence and gates at this corner site. The design which the applicants have selected is well detailed, but not so elaborate that it will draw attention away from the historic structure. The black painted finish is appropriate for metal work on a building of this age and type. While brownstone curbs are typical for late 19th century rowhouses, concrete curbs are often found in neighborhoods developed in the early 20th century.

However, we believe that a six-foot fence is too tall for an historic district which the designation report describes as an “early-twentieth-century suburb” which exhibits “the adaptation of romantic principles to the urban grid.” The applicant has provided several photographs of properties with similar fences in this area. The last one in the presentation shows that 1809 Avenue H has a more appropriately scaled four-foot high fence. We urge the Commission to require that the fence at 1901 Avenue H be no taller than four feet.

9-1 (Ikpembgbe)

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

LPC-26-11277 -- 233 Mott Street - Old St. Patrick's Convent and Girls' School - Individual Landmark, Manhattan

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

We find that this proposed building has many features appropriate to the historic district and the neighboring buildings on the street. Its materials, the scale and placement of the punched windows, and differentiation between the ground floor storefront and upper residential floors are all harmonious with historic buildings of this scale and type in this district. However, the building is one story too tall. A significant setback of the top floor should be required. This would maintain the strong cornice line of the adjacent buildings.

We also think the details of the storefront could be improved. A more cornice-like projection above the sign band would help, and details of the bulkhead, doors, and framing should be studied with the goal of providing more traditional, contoured designs instead of bland, square, extrusions.

Approved 9-0-1 (Ikpembgbe) with modification: top floor to be set back at least 5 feet and consider changing the material from that of the façade.

Approximate time: 2:15; join Zoom by: 1:15

LPC-26-09744 - 894-900 Broadway - Ladies' Mile Historic District - Manhattan - August 18, 2026

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

The VSNY supports the proposed alterations to the southern-most entrance at 894-900 Broadway. Our decision is based on this building's unique history, and the equal contributions made here by two prominent architectural firms.

We recognize that the design of this entrance previously approved under the Master Plan was based on sound preservation practice. The historic 1905 photograph clearly shows the door surround, designed by Maynicke and Franke, added to the McKim Mead and White façade at that time. Designed in a formal Beaux Arts style, this small entrance porch would be a handsome addition to many buildings of the period. Blown up in size, it could have been happily grafted onto Penn Station.

However, we feel that the design now being proposed is actually more sympathetic to the character of McKim Mead and White's 1886 design. At that time, the firm was not so committed to the monumental classical revival structures that later defined them. The Designation Report notes that Russell Sturgis, writing in the Architectural Record in 1895, praised 894 as a "truly modern business building, designed without reference to a particular historic style." The report also states that former LPC Commissioner Sarah Landau agreed with Sturgis about the ahistorical nature of the design of 894.

Regarding the specifics of the proposed design, the existing double doors, aluminum framing and frosted glass soffit panels at this entrance are modern. They have no relationship to the original facades of 1886 or 1905 or the entrances seen in the historic photographs. Removing them will not destroy any significant material or a record of significant alterations. The proposed framing, based on historic material still in place on the building, will help to unify these facades.

We acknowledge that the double doors to be installed at this entrance will be wider than original doors found at buildings of this age and type. Although the VSNY has often spoken against the installation of wide doors at modestly scaled rowhouses, we feel that it is an acceptable trade-off at a large commercial building to provide greater accessibility.

Approved 10-0.

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

LPC-26-07557 -- 155 West 72nd Street - Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, Manhattan

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

When we began our review, we felt that the design, colors, and detailing of the proposed signs would be perfectly in keeping with the busy commercial character of West 72nd Street. In addition, the style of the sign is similar to earlier signs for this business going back to the mid-20th century, and the storefront itself retains elements of this period character.

However, we were concerned about the width of the horizontal sign. The Commission's guidelines call for signage in sign-bands to be limited to "the flat area on the façade... located immediately above the storefront." At Tip-Top Shoes, the existing horizontal sign extends the full width of the building, including the space over the entrance to the upper floors. Earlier versions of the sign, as seen on board 4, were exactly the width of the store. The space above the entrance to the upper floors had no signage. This would be a more appropriate configuration.

However, at the time of designation, the sign for Tip-Top extended the full width of the building. As this proposal would leave the existing housing in place, we have no objection to the proposal.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 10-0.