Victorian Society Testimony for October 20th, 2026: 69 Orange Street – Brooklyn Heights Historic District (LPC-26-12616); 321A Jefferson Avenue - Bedford Historic District (LPC-26-11915); 21 Bleecker Street - Noho East Historic District (LPC-26-11256); 139 Spring Street – SoHo – Cast Iron Historic District (LPC-27-00943); 61-02 Center Drive (Pine Bank Arch)- Central Park Scenic Landmark (LPC-27-02434); 244 West 104th Street - Riverside - West End Historic District Extension II (LPC-27-01324); 222 West 71st Street - West End - Collegiate Historic District Extension (LPC-24-11454)

Approximate time: 10:45; join Zoom by: 9:45

LPC-26-12616 -- 69 Orange Street – Brooklyn Heights Historic District, Brooklyn

Good morning, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. The contributing structure at 69 Orange Street, built c. 1828, is among the oldest houses in Brooklyn Heights. Originally designed in the Federal style, the third floor with a mansard roof and ornate dormer windows was likely added sometime after the Civil War.

While this house has been modified before over its nearly 200-year history, we object to the proposed overly large rear addition that dwarfs the scale of the original structure. The addition, measuring nearly 33 feet in length, will more than double the footprint of this house. While the proposed side porch helps to break down the out-of-scale mass of the addition, it does not hide it.

We have no objection to the proposed third floor rear dormer and new front porch. The front porch has historic precedent on this house and is stylistically appropriate to the building's style and period.

Approved with modifications 7-0: review and improve detailing of front porch, review and improve proportions of side windows of the addition, review height of parapet on the back addition where attached to the historic house and the configuration of the dormer window.

Approximate time: 11:15; join Zoom by: 10:15

LPC-26-11915- - 321A Jefferson Avenue - Bedford Historic District, Brooklyn

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

The Victorian Society supports, in concept, this proposal to reclad the modern rooftop addition at 321A Jefferson Avenue. We do so for several reasons. First, this addition, and one other in this six-building row, was in place at the time of designation. Second, the proposed work won't require removal of any significant architectural material. And finally because there are a number many similar Mansard-clad top floor additions constructed in the 19th century on rowhouses in this and other historic districts.

We also felt that, in a house with arch-headed doors at the parlor floor entrance, using arch-headed windows in the modified dormers would help unify the façade.

However, we believe the detailing is overly elaborate. We recommend using only one color of slate on this relatively narrow Mansard roof. Also, since the remaining historic iron work in this row is somewhat plain, the proposed cresting should be simplified.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved with modifications 7-0: consider slate instead of wood shingles, use a different window type in dormer, simplify shingle design to one color.

Approximate time: 11:45; join Zoom by: 10:45

LPC-26-11256 -- 21 Bleecker Street - Noho East Historic District, Manhattan

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

We are unable to comment on the appropriateness of the proposed new prime windows because the application includes no comparative dimensions. Dimensioned illustrations of existing or typical historic windows are required in order to judge the appropriateness of the new windows. We don't know how a preservation finding can be made without this basic information.

The large-scale elevation on drawing 3, combined with the description of the new windows as "insert" windows, leads us to think that the glass area of the new windows will be much reduced.

Also, we do not understand why separate storm windows are being added. The presence of storm windows is a trade-off when historic single glazed windows are being retained, but new double or triple glazed windows do not require storm windows. The installation will add additional material to the window surrounds, leaving them even further removed from the detailing, setback, and slender framing of historic windows. And the bronze finish of the storm windows won't match the black finish of the prime windows. A two-tone paint job would not be appropriate here.

Approved with modifications 7-0: applicant to work with staff on color and assess need for storm windows on exterior.

lunch

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

LPC-27-00943– 139 Spring Street – SoHo – Cast Iron Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. The c. 1895-96 contributing structure at the northeast corner of Spring and Wooster streets retains several original architectural elements to its storefronts on both streets. We do not agree with the replacement of doors on both facades with different designs. The proposed Spring Street doors are inappropriate in style and character. The proposed Wooster Street door design should be used at both locations.

We also object to the proposed light box fascia installed directly behind the glass. The fascia should not be illuminated and should be pulled back from the face of glass as much as possible. Additionally, the proposed video screen should be pulled away from the glass and mounted against the interior wall of this display space. Screens of this size and type should be interior fixtures, not illuminated storefront billboards.

Approved 7-0 with light box fascias set back as far as possible to existing soffit and include no LED lighting, and LED screen set back as far as possible.

Approximate time: 2:45; join Zoom by: 1:45

LPC-27-02434 -- 61-02 Center Drive - Central Park - Scenic Landmark, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. One of the most important innovations in the design of Central Park was the separation of the three types of circulation in the park—for pedestrians, for equestrians, and for vehicles. The park's grand system of bridges and arches, including Pine Bank Arch, was designed to serve this unique circulation system. Mostly, these three systems were isolated from each other, each one providing unique visual experiences for the user. Occasionally they came together in parallel fashion so that, for example, pedestrians could watch carriage traffic. But they never merged, requiring different types of users to occupy the same physical pathway.

This proposal violates that basic, historic design feature by putting pedestrians and equestrians in the same space. It's bad, if not dangerous, for both, and it narrows the cul-de-sac specifically designed to allow horses to easily turn around, necessary because of the earlier elimination of the historic loop bridle trail.

It does so unnecessarily. We acknowledge that pedestrians sometimes walk on the bridle trail and don't want to be left at a dead end. The bridle trail can be extended along its historic route until it meets a pedestrian path, or a pedestrian path can be extended to meet the bridle trail, but each should have a clear physical end. If this proposal is part of a larger scheme to eliminate the bridle trail or change its use, that should be presented in a comprehensive way, rather than asking the Commission to review it piecemeal.

The proposal's aesthetic design is more sympathetic to the park's historic character than some of the highly engineered, Modernistic features that the Conservancy has lately been constructing. But even so, the type and placement of the stone seating is not typical of the naturalistic rock formations and glacial erratic boulders found in Olmsted parks. It looks more like D.O.T.'s recent approach in urban plazas. However, the problem here is a more fundamental one involving basic principles of historic design and function. The Commission should not approve it.

Approved 6-0.

Approximate time: 3:30; join Zoom by: 2:30

LPC-27-01324 -- 244 West 104th Street - Riverside - West End Historic District Extension II, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We oppose NYCHA's proposal to replace twelve windows in the bowfront portions of the facade solely to install permanent exhaust fans. The new windows would not match the others on the building. This would disrupt the historic façade. Better solutions exist: bathroom ventilation can be accommodated by putting small grilles in the doors. Most living rooms already have window air conditioners. These windows can be modified to also accommodate vent fans. That would meet NYCHA's ventilation goals without wholesale replacement. We urge the Commission to deny the application as proposed and ask NYCHA to return with a less intrusive design.

We also confess to not understanding the concept of drawing the supposedly noxious air from kitchens and bathrooms into the main living space in the apartment before venting it outside. This may meet the letter of the ASHRAE standard, but it does not seem to meet its purpose.

We cannot imagine the owner of a market-rate apartment building making such a proposal, or the Commission approving it. We should not endorse second-rate preservation for our lower income historic district residents.

We also note that NYCHA buildings are city-owned; therefore, the Commission's report should be binding, not advisory.

Recommend approval with modifications 7-0: try to locate fans in kitchen windows, including possibly altering window operation.

Approximate time: 3:45; join Zoom by: 2:45

LPC-24-11454 -- 222 West 71st Street - West End - Collegiate Historic District Extension, Manhattan

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

The proposed work at 222 West 71st Street, combining rear yard and rooftop additions in a way which will overwhelm the original building, is not acceptable.

222 West 71st Street was built as one of a seven-house row, 212 to 224 West 71st. The front facades of the remaining houses have been significantly altered, but the photos on Board 25 show that 222 and its neighbor, 224, retain their original rear extensions, brick cladding, top floor window openings and brick corbeling.

Under this proposal, all the historic rear façade elements at 222 will be destroyed. Any sense of the original dimensions, proportions and footprint of this building, and its relationship to its neighbor, will be lost.

The Commission Rules, which allow multi-story rear yard additions which leave the top floor intact, and rooftop additions which are set three feet behind the location of the historic parapet, are generous. They should be the defining standards at 222.

This is not a project which can be improved with modest tweaking. It should not be left to staff. The applicant should be required to return with a modified proposal for a full public review.

Approved with modifications 7-0: rear addition to be lowered by one floor and the rooftop addition to be set back from rear wall.