

Victorian Society Testimony for September 15, 2026: 1227 Pacific Street, aka 1230-1234 Atlantic Avenue and 1222-1228 Atlantic Avenue - St. Bartholomew's Church - Individual Landmark (LPC-26-12626); 281 Sterling Street – Prospect Lefferts Gardens Historic District (LPC-26-11330); 404 Richmond Terrace - St. George/New Brighton Historic District (LPC-26-06620); 95 Westentry Road – Ernest Flagg’s Todt Hill Cottages: Bowcot – Individual Landmark (LPC-26-12065)

Approximate time: 10:30; join Zoom by: 9:30

LPC-26-12626 -- 1227 Pacific Street, aka 1230-1234 Atlantic Avenue and 1222-1228 Atlantic Avenue - St. Bartholomew's Church - Individual Landmark, Brooklyn

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We view this application as a highly inappropriate proposal and a dangerous precedent for the treatment of designated religious properties. Even the owner agrees that the building is in poor condition. Permanently removing one of its most important and valuable architectural features is not the way to ensure the building’s survival and restoration.

This stained glass does not incorporate religious iconography. Therefore, there is no argument that its presence would offend a future occupant of the building. The window serves only one room in the suggested apartment layout; the loss of this one private room in favor of a common space for the building that could retain the stained glass would not be a great hardship.

The proposed permanent removal of the window would serve no public purpose; the applicant has not proposed the restoration of the glass and its display in a museum or other public setting. He has not suggested that the sale of the glass would do anything to assist the restoration of the building or to ensure its appropriate reuse. There is nothing in the proposal to prevent the building’s continued deterioration and demolition by neglect or loss to fire or evisceration as part of a new development.

This application should focus our attention on the problem we have in this city with surplus historic religious properties and the lack of tools to address the issue. We suggest that the Commission should be taking the lead in devising better approaches. Approving an application such as this would do the opposite. It would create a bad precedent and would normalize the inappropriate stripping of these buildings, helping turn them into development sites. The application should be denied.

No action. There was considerable opposition. Applicant to provide more information and confer with staff.

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

LPC-26-11330 -- 281 Sterling Street – Prospect Lefferts Gardens Historic District, Brooklyn

Good morning, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. The streetscape of Sterling Street between Rogers Avenue and Nostrand Avenue in the Prospect Lefferts Gardens Historic District is defined by terraced front areaways creating slightly raised planting beds and exterior entry stairs divided into two separate runs; one run of stairs is part of the landscape and the second is connected to the architecture of the rowhouse. This division allows for the first floor to be elevated providing a windowed garden level but the entry stoop does not appear as large and intimidating as those of townhouses from the previous generation. The property at 263 Sterling Street provided as a precedent appears to be the only example on the block of a front areaway lowered to the sidewalk level.

We do not object in general to the lowering of the areaway to sidewalk level, but the application package is missing several key components required for evaluation of the proposed design. First, the application states that lowering the areaway to sidewalk level will provide wheelchair access to the ground floor. As there are only ten risers up to the first floor, dropping the areaway down to the sidewalk level alone would not seem to provide adequate headroom. Is a ramp within the areaway proposed for wheelchair access? A plan of the proposed areaway needs to be provided.

Second, there is insufficient information provided about the newly exposed wall surfaces around the areaway. Will the property's garden level windows be enlarged with lowered sills? Elevations with material callouts are needed for the three perimeter conditions. Third, will the entire front areaway be paved? The planted areas are part of the historic streetscape and a planting bed should be maintained. This also aids in absorbing storm water runoff. Applicant should provide a plan showing the extents of the paved area.

Fourth, the existing elevational view from the sidewalk should be maintained with the fence sitting on top of a curb. The curb creates an important visual separation of the areaway from the sidewalk and ties together the front steps of the neighboring properties. Refer to the left image on slide 7. The curb can be broken at the proposed entry gate. An annotated front elevation with the curb, fence, and gate is needed to be sure this important relationship is maintained.

Approved 10-0, but work with staff to incorporate planting beds near the fence.

Approximate time: 11:30; join Zoom by: 10:30

LPC-26-06620 -- 404 Richmond Terrace - St. George/New Brighton Historic District - Staten Island

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We're always glad to see old LPC violations being addressed. Unfortunately, the material presented here today doesn't clearly show the violations from 2015 and 2018. We believe this application should be laid over until this is clarified, but will comment on the changes we can support, and those which we find inappropriate.

We support the construction of a raised terrace in front of the primary façade. The work has not concealed any significant historic material, and the 1940 tax photo shows a level front yard and simple retaining walls in this location. We also support the installation of symmetrical planting beds here. Landscaping is an easily reversible change. And we could support a circular reflecting pool centered on the garden, without the superstructure.

However, we oppose legalization of the other changes the applicant has made. Too many of the elements added without Commission input draw attention away from the historic features of this unique property. Elements which should be removed include the four white-painted statues set into the planting beds on the terrace; the white painted sign, shown on the left side of Board 9, raised on poles set between the planting beds and the parking lot; the metal sign hinging between the third and fourth columns; and all of the overly curly iron window grilles. The white marble paving on the terrace is overly bright; white marble was not a typical paving material used in 1835. It should be replaced with bluestone or slate.

We found the decision to use mosaic tile cladding in several locations to be especially egregious. That mosaic tile is almost the definition of "Draws Attention To Itself." The simple retaining wall visible in the photos dated 1928 and 1940 on Board 3, which appear to match the remaining wall still in place along Westervelt shown on Board 17, should be the model for any new walls added to the property.

The design of the handrails set between the severe Doric columns on the front façade is equally egregious. New handrails should be based on those seen in the tax photo. We were unable to review the design of the masonry curb and iron fence approved for installation along Westervelt Avenue pursuant to COFA 16-8965. However, we find the

design of existing mosaic tile-clad retaining wall and the inoperable gate it supports, both shown on Board 13, to be overly busy.

Finally, the ornate Beaux Arts style stone bench facing the parking lot, shown on Board 12, has no relationship to the austere Greek Revival style of the house. The bench should be removed. Any work approved on this house should be based on historic conditions, which are well documented, and should not further reduce the building's integrity. Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 9-1 (Mahan) with modifications: work with staff to simplify patio guardrails, remove granite wall cladding and reclad with in more typical scale and details, that permeable pavers be installed in the parking lot, that light and speaker cabinets attached to the building be painted the color of the walls.

Approximate time: 12:00; join Zoom by: 11:00

LPC-26-12065 -- 95 Westentry Road – Ernest Flagg’s Todt Hill Cottages: Bowcot – Individual Landmark, Staten Island

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ speaking for the Victorian Society New York. The VSNY is happy to support the proposed alterations at Bowcot. Demolition of the modern greenhouse and verandah will not destroy any significant historic material. The design, proportions, and materials of the addition will relate well to original features seen on Bowcot. The lower roof line of both the 1980 addition and the proposed addition will reinforce the dominance of the original building on this site. And removing a small amount of material below an existing window to create a new door opening will have no effect on the overall character of the building.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 8-2 (Chu, Wilder) with modifications: siding and trim to be painted wood.