



Greenwich  
Village  
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TESTIMONY OF THE  
GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

11 Jane Street  
Certificate of Appropriateness Application  
Greenwich Village Historic District  
June 21, 2016

Good afternoon Commissioners. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation feels very strongly that the application for 11 Jane Street is not appropriate for this block and should be rejected.

The proposed new building far exceeds the height of every mid-block building on the south side of Jane Street, and even the corner building at Greenwich Avenue where larger buildings would traditionally be found. In fact, with its oversized mechanicals, the proposal exceeds the height of every building on this block, even the exceptionally large converted industrial building it faces, only the decorative parapets of which reach the proposed height of 11 Jane. A much more appropriate scale for any new construction here would be the 3 and 4-story townhouses and commercial buildings adjacent to and across from the site.

The façade design is also completely out-of-place. Though elegant, it's more reminiscent of a cast iron building in SoHo, or more recent designs on Bond Street in NoHo, than the Village. The repetitive geometric grid of large windows stresses the horizontality of this structure, and evokes a commercial or office building much more than the residential development which typifies blocks like these. If new construction is allowed here, it is essential that the building be reduced in scale and the façade broken up, perhaps to reflect the various interior uses, in order to make it less imposing and more similar to traditional Village architecture.

Finally, we must note the devastating cumulative effect which the loss of buildings like 11 Jane Street has on the scale and quality of the Greenwich Village Historic District. Such buildings have simple but handsome early 20<sup>th</sup> century detail and contribute to the sense of place and variegated scale of the Village. Their modest one and two story stature defers to the historic residential and commercial structures around them, allowing them to remain in the foreground. They are part of the quirk, charm, and surprise that one encounters on Village streets; each a little different from the next, but sharing common overall qualities.

The proposed new design would have none of that. We urge the Commission to consider the value of the existing building and the overall impact upon the district that the loss of so many of these structures has. Should the Commission approve the building's demolition, it is essential that the proposed design be re-thought, scaled back, and made more compatible with a block like this which forms the very heart of the Greenwich Village Historic District.

As you know, in recent years historic districts in Greenwich Village have seen an unprecedented increase in applications for changes. The entire meaning of landmark designation is changing, and few applications speak to that possibility, and the possibility of losing the qualities of a historic district which designation was meant to preserve, more than the application for the proposed new building at 11 Jane Street. We urge you to take a strong stand and ensure that the historic and aesthetic qualities of this landmarked district are protected, and reject the current application.