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Society for
Historic
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TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
REGARDING CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR 145 PERRY STREET
February 7, 2017

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation has substantial concerns about the proposed design for a pair of new buildings at 145 Perry Street, and urges the Commission not to approve the proposal in its current form.

While the height and size of the proposed new buildings is in keeping with surrounding buildings, the design is not. The south building appears fortress-like and, in spite of its relatively modest scale, imposing and forbidding. The granite base with slit-like windows, the double height cut out wells, and the deeply indented entrance all make the building seem like a moated castle, rather than engaging with the street as is more common in this district. The plantings, beginning about six feet above street level, would contribute to the feeling of a pedestrian of being dwarfed by the building, in spite of the streetwall being only four and a half stories – albeit a relatively tall four and a half stories.

The imposing and somewhat institutional quality of the building gives the feeling of a museum, bank, or even a high-end retail store in Miami or Los Angeles. But none of those references quite make sense for this neighborhood, where the architecture tends to be simple with charming and accessible detail.

The north building has a very different but equally inappropriate character. The broad expanses of glass set within the bronze frame might make sense as an updated version of a cast iron loft building, but cast iron loft buildings are not characteristic of this area or district. While there are commercial and industrial buildings here, they are all masonry and have a very different quality than what is proposed.

The proposed designs for both buildings use handsome materials and have some thoughtful and interesting details. But the design misses the mark in terms of a compatible and appropriate addition for this corner and this district. We know that there is a skillful design team behind the proposal; we believe that with the right direction from the Commission, they can come up with a design which makes sense for this site.