



TESTIMONY OF VILLAGE PRESERVATION

418 West 20th Street
Certificate of Appropriateness Application
May 14, 2019

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Village Preservation strongly opposes the proposed alterations to 418 West 20th Street beyond the facade repair and restoration work. Although it is outside of our catchment area, we felt that the significance of this building and row as well as the potential precedent that such an alteration could set warranted our testimony.

Cushman Row is a remarkably unified row of Greek Revival houses, which form the heart and lynchpin of the Chelsea Historic District. There is unity not only in their front facades, but to their rear facades as well, which are visible from the public right of way, allowing a unique glimpse into the rear of mid-19th century row house living.

This proposal to demolish the entire rear façade, add a very large addition in back, remove most of the current roof, extensively excavate the rear yard and significantly extend the cellar dishonors this building, the row and the district, not to mention New York City history. If executed, all that would be left of the existing original house would be the front façade, part of the roof and the sidewalls — literally a former shell of what had been a nearly pristine elegant Greek Revival row house. Rather this could be an opportunity to restore the rear to its former glory, as seen in the adjacent houses in the row and celebrate the home rather than desecrate it.

We therefore urge the Commission to reject the proposed rear addition, which completely disregards the reverence due to this unique surviving piece of New York's historic and architectural heritage. The remaining historic fabric on the rear of the house should be maintained, and no alterations to the rear inconsistent with the existing unified row of rear facades should be allowed.

Thank you.