



Greenwich  
Village  
Society for  
Historic  
Preservation

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TESTIMONY OF THE  
GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

85-89 Jane Street  
Certificate of Appropriateness Application  
Greenwich Village Historic District  
July 12, 2016

Good afternoon Commissioners. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation feels very strongly that the application for 85-89 Jane Street is not appropriate, and should be rejected.

This is an incredibly special block in the Greenwich Village Historic District. While at its geographic edge, this block is very much at the heart of this district and why it was designated. The north side where the site lies is all 3 ½ story 19<sup>th</sup> century rowhouses, including the lovely former Robert Bayard House next door at 83 Jane Street, with only 85-89 Jane and one other one-story commercial building deviating from this pattern. The south side of the street is similarly harmonious, with 3 ½ story 19<sup>th</sup> century rowhouses interrupted only by larger structures at the corners, and the narrow tenements at 80 ½ and 82 Jane Street.

Into this, the proposal would insert a highly visible 80 ft. tall glass tower that would glow at night, and a 90 ft. tall concrete tower behind it, each of which would be quite prominent from the street and down the block both east and west. There is absolutely no justification for these elements, and they should be eliminated entirely from the proposal. These are not slender chimneys; these are large, jarringly out-of-place elements which are unnecessary visual intrusions into this historic street.

For the proposed façade, there is a much greater degree of sensitivity, but still we believe some work needs to be done. We appreciate that the applicant proposes to retain and restore most of the facades of the two buildings, especially as the designation report identifies them (incorrectly, we believe) as “completely utilitarian.” We also think that many of the details and materials of the proposed additions are thoughtful and harmonious with the original buildings and their surroundings.

However, as currently proposed, the additions could look too monolithic. We urge that the parapet of 89-93 Jane be maintained, and that the addition be set slightly back from the façade of the building, so that it reads clearly as an addition, rather than as a single, massive building.

The proposed addition to 85 Jane appears to be set back slightly from the existing façade with a slightly different height than the proposed addition to 89-93. We believe this is important to help ensure that any new addition here does not read as monolithic or overwhelming in scale, and that the rhythm and

variation of the street is maintained. We believe it is important that the two additions vary from the original buildings and each other in depth and height.

This is clearly a skillful architect and a thoughtful applicant, and we believe that with the appropriate direction from the Commission this could be a welcome addition to the historic district. Currently, it is not. The startling and intrusive towers have no place here, and the façade should be adjusted to ensure that the modest scale and dimensions of this prototypical Greenwich Village street are maintained.

Thank you.