



Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

252 East 11th Street
New York, New York 10005

(212) 475-9585
fax: (212) 475-9582
www.gvshp.org

Executive Director
Andrew Berman

President of the Board
Arthur Levin

Vice-Presidents
Leslie Mason
Kate Bostock Shefferman

Secretary/Treasurer
Katherine Schoonover

Trustees
Mary Ann Arisman
John Bacon
Penelope Bareaux
Tom Birchard
Elizabeth Ely
Cassie Glover
Justine Leguizamo
Ruth McCoy
Andrew S. Paul
Cynthia Penney
Robert Rogers
Allan G. Sperling
Judith Stonehill
Fred Wistow
Linda Yowell
F. Anthony Zunino III

Advisors
Kent Barwick
Joan K. Davidson
Christopher Forbes
Margaret Halsey Gardiner
Elizabeth Gilmore
Carol Greitzer
Tony Hiss
Martin Hutner
James Stewart Polshak
Elinor Ratner
Henry Hope Reed
Martica Sawin Fitch
Anne-Marie Sumner
Calvin Trillin
Jean-Claude van Itallie
George Vellonakis
Vicki Weiner
Anthony C. Wood

TESTIMONY OF THE
GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

605 East 9th Street, aka 605-615 East 9th Street and 350-360 East 10th Street
(Former) Public School 64
Certificate of Appropriateness Application
Individual Landmark
May 7, 2013

Good day Commissioners and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Andrew Berman, representing the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

As you know, GVSHP worked alongside many others in the community to advocate for the landmark designation of the former P.S. 64 and to see it returned to community use. After extensively reviewing the application for this venerable East Village individual landmark, we have concerns about the visibility of some of the stair bulkheads, mechanicals, and perimeter railings at the roof as well as the removal of floor area at both courtyards facing East 9th and East 10th Streets.

The LPC designation report gives many compelling reasons for the unique and incredibly important architectural and cultural significance of the former P.S. 64. In an era when prolific school architect C.B.J. Snyder was pressured to re-use school designs to keep up with the rapid population increases throughout New York City, he took special care in his innovative and unique design of P.S. 64; quite simply, to cite the designation report, “there is no school design like P.S. 64.” The building survives as “one of the most highly developed and intact examples of the work of C.B.J. Snyder in this part of the city, and shows the work of this architect at the height of his creative power.”

Here, Snyder employed the French Renaissance Revival style, which included a mansard roof – rare in his designs – and pedimented dormer windows. These two features are specifically called out in the designation report as significant, and our concern is that the current proposal for numerous bulkheads, mechanicals, and railings will detract from this beautiful roofline.

The proposed work also includes removing portions of the elevated courtyards. These courtyards are also significant as being typical of Snyder’s fully developed H-Plan. To paraphrase the designation report, these courtyards provided the luxury of open space in a densely packed neighborhood, making this school an immediately recognizable symbol of civic pride and benevolence. To remove floor area from these courtyards for basement access would compromise not only the original design, but also Snyder’s innovative intention of providing open space in a neighborhood that sorely needed it, and, in fact, still sorely needs it. While ADA accessibility is of course an important need, we feel that the basement doors that are being reopened on the 10th Street side could be used for this purpose. At the same time, the courtyards – so crucial to the success of this building’s design – would be preserved.

Finally, although the LPC does not regulate use, the history of community services in this building is well documented, even to a large extent in the designation report. In fact, Snyder provided street entrances to the auditorium with the specific intent of allowing community access; P.S. 64 is the oldest extant elementary school building with this feature in the city. We continue to believe that this building – designed partially with the community in mind – should continue to serve as a much-needed community resource moving forward.

In closing, we strongly urge the Commission to not approve this application unless the proposed work at the rooftop and the courtyards are re-thought so that this invaluable piece of civic architecture is preserved.

Thank you.