



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

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**TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR
538-544 HUDSON STREET
July 25, 2017**

Good morning Commissioners. I am testifying on behalf of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation in opposition to the proposed design for 538-544 Hudson Street.

A proposed new building in the Greenwich Village Historic District, especially one of this size and at this prominent a location, warrants the highest level of scrutiny. We find the proposed design deficient in several key respects, and urge that it be substantially rethought.

The proposed building feels imposing and monotonous – actually even larger than its 6 stories with a penthouse. Barring a redesign which changes that perception, the size of the building should be reduced considerably.

To help deal with the sense of unrelieved mass and monotony, we think the building should be visually broken up both horizontally and vertically. There also needs to be greater articulation and depth to the façade – the smooth undulating surface punctuated by dozens of identical projecting window frames does not provide the level of depth and variation such a building needs. Instead, the projecting frames add to the sense of monotony to the design and seem gimmicky and inharmonious at this location.

The ground floor is also lacking in detail or distinction, and would benefit from the addition of an element like awnings or variations in depth. Given the length of the Hudson Street frontage of this building, that is especially important. We also find the metal-clad penthouse especially jarring and out of place, and believe it should be eliminated.

While we applaud the inclusion of a cornice in the proposed design and the use of brick, we nevertheless believe that this design has a long way to go before it could be deemed “appropriate” for this corner of the Greenwich Village Historic District.

Hudson Street is the main street of the West Village. Jane Jacobs’ former house is less than a block north of here. Hudson Street embodies the spirit and character of the West Village in its low-scale, charm, and sense of ease. Any additions to this street should share that character. The proposed design unfortunately does not, and we feel strongly should be sent back for considerable revision and reconsideration.