

**Village Preservation Testimony**  
**Certificate of Appropriateness Application**

**LPC-25-09125**

**139 Thompson Street - Sullivan-Thompson Historic District**

**April 21, 2026**

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Village Preservation is extremely concerned about this proposal, and highly skeptical that demolition is the only viable option here. We all know that there are literally tens of thousands of buildings this age or older in New York City, many landmarked, others not, which have been continually inhabited, maintained, and repaired as needed over many decades. Why, as the applicants claim, is this particular building uniquely beyond repair?

If the purported answer is that it is more expensive or more challenging to repair and restore the historic structure, that is not a reasonable argument to justify demolishing a contributing building within a historic district.

If the answer is that the building has faced many years neglect, then this should be explored as a possible "demolition by neglect" case. There is considerable evidence to indicate that the longtime owner allowed the building to deteriorate for years, ignoring violations and worsening conditions, and now seeks to be rewarded by being allowed to demolish a landmarked building and destroy 19 units of housing, 12 of which were rent regulated, and replace them with just six super-luxury apartments.

Nos. 139 and 137 Thompson Street were both built in 1875 by George Holzeit for the same developer. As noted in the designation report, the two tenements are identical, with matching neo-Grec features, and both are contributing buildings to the Sullivan-Thompson Historic District. No. 137 continues to be occupied and in sound condition. It is unfathomable that of these two identical,

contemporaneous buildings, one is stable, occupiable, and maintained in good repair, while the other is this far gone, unless it is due to intentional neglect.

There needs to be an extremely high burden of proof on the applicant to demonstrate that this building, beyond a shadow of a doubt, needs to be taken down. We have not seen such irrefutable proof within the provided presentation materials. Beyond that, an unbiased review must also be conducted by an independent structural engineer, and shared with all interested parties for review before a decision can be reached on this proposal.

At the Community Board meeting back in January, the applicants could not give a clear answer as to which agency is responsible for making the official determination that this building absolutely needs to come down for safety reasons (which would be the only valid reason to demolish an architecturally significant, landmarked building). We believe the onus would be on the Department of Buildings to notify the owner, the LPC, and the public *if* the building poses a true and immediate safety risk. It is not up to you, Commissioners, to make that call, but rather to determine whether it is "appropriate" to demolish this historically significant building. We find it to be completely inappropriate, and we urge you to deny this application and to require retention and repair of this building. Thank you.