



## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO REVISED APPLICATION FOR CHANGES TO 131 and 131 1/2 CHARLES STREET

Village Preservation strongly urges the Landmarks Preservation Commission to reject the revised application for changes to this 1834 house and carriage house. The extraordinary significance of these structures should be noted; they are both individually landmarked (among the very first individually landmarked buildings in New York City) and located within the Greenwich Village Historic District Extension I, as well as listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. No. 131 Charles Street is a uniquely intact federal style rowhouse, while 131 1/2 Charles Street is a carriage house that dates to the late 19th century, which from 1959 to 1968 was the residence of celebrated photographer Diane Arbus at the height of her career.

The proposed changes will diminish the qualities which make these buildings so extraordinary, and worse, will endanger them and surrounding landmarked structures. The revisions to the application do not address by far the majority of objections we and others raised at the hearing in January, echoed in many cases by members of the Commission.

Our ongoing concerns include:

- While the excavation under the main house has been reduced in the revised application, it has not been entirely eliminated. It should be. Anything less would needlessly endanger this iconic structure.
- The horse walk is still proposed to be eliminated, even if the doors and window will remain. This key historic element should be maintained on this individual landmark.
- The still-proposed excavation under the rear yard and house are dangerous and could compromise these and other nearby landmarked structures, including the front house. It should be noted it is planned for completely non-essential and superfluous uses.
- The proposed front house rear dormer, while not visible from the street, will diminish the historic integrity of what is one of New York City's earliest individual landmarks and most intact federal era houses.
- The proposed main house rear facade alterations still diminish the historic integrity of what is one of New York City's earliest individual landmarks and most intact federal era houses. On a landmark such as this, no historic brick should be removed to enlarge openings.
- The proposed facade alterations to the rear house remove it from its long period of significance, from the late 19th through the 20th centuries, when among other things it was home to Diane Arbus during the most important years of her career. Here as well, brick should not be removed to enlarge openings.

Regardless of whether the Commission has allowed similar alterations at other locations in Greenwich Village, they are not justified for this uniquely historic and significant, individually landmarked pair of structures. Protecting the integrity of structures such as these, and ensuring their safety, is exactly what the Commission was established to do. I strongly urge you to abide by that mandate, and reject this proposal.

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