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**The City of New York  
Community Board 8 Manhattan**

April 27, 2020

Honorable Sarah Carroll, Chair  
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building  
One Center Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10007

**RE: 34-36 East 70th Street (between Madison Avenue and Park Avenue). Upper East Side Historic District.** *J. L. Ramirez, architect.* Application is for modifications to the front elevation, the areaway, the rear elevation, and the rear yard.

[Please note that additions at the roof were originally part of this application. However, these additions, *not visible from the public way*, were approved at the staff level at the Landmarks Preservation Commission.]

Dear Chair Carroll,

**THIS RESOLUTION WAS VOTED ON IN TWO PARTS. PLEASE SEE BELOW:**

**PART A:** All work at the rear elevation, the addition of a front area way, the extension in height of the front door, replacement of the 2nd floor iron railing with Juliet balconies.

**PART B:** The proposed replacement of the existing cladding at the front elevation with different textures of limestone.

**WHEREAS** 34-36 East 70th Street is a neo-Medieval style building originally constructed by Charles Graham & Sons in 1885;

**WHEREAS** 34-36 East 70th Street originally presented as a neo-Grec brownstone-fronted row house. Later modifications to the front elevation were designed by William Lawrence Bottomley between 1924 and 1929;

**WHEREAS** James Warburg (a nephew of Felix Warburg who hired C.P.H. Gilbert to build his own house, now The Jewish Museum) purchased 34 East 70th Street in 1925 and later, in 1929, purchased 36 East 70th Street;

**WHEREAS** William Lawrence Bottomley (who, among other notable commissions, designed the River House and Turtle Bay Gardens) was hired to combine the two houses into a single 5-story house, 37' wide; his new design presented as neo-Medieval and exists to this day;

**WHEREAS** 34-36 East 70th Street is now being converted back to a single family home after being divided into 10 apartments;

**WHEREAS** the front elevation of 34-36 East 70th Street is distinguished by a set of pointed Florentine arches at the 5th floor and a mixture of smooth and rough stone [Note: At the 5th floor there is one "blind" arch that hides a party wall — it is at this point that 34 East 70th Street and 36 East 70th Street were joined together.];

**WHEREAS** the current condition of the “underlying material” (brownstone) has degraded badly and is beginning to crumble; over the years the series of finishes on the brownstone have trapped water causing the brownstone to deteriorate;

**WHEREAS** on top of the “underlying” material, is the existing cladding — a mixture of smooth stucco and cast stone that has been painted;

**WHEREAS** to correct the damaged front elevation, the applicant proposes a *significant intervention that would replicate the same detail of the original Bottomley design* — the neo-Medieval design would be maintained BUT the applicant would replace the stuccoed-brownstone with limestone;

**WHEREAS** the design intent is to restore the building **AND** recreate the existing mottled character of the facade by using different treatments of limestone to maintain the texture and the color distinction — thus some of the limestone would present as smoother and lighter, some would be hammered and sandblasted and present as darker so that the original character of the front elevation as Bottomley intended it would be maintained;

**WHEREAS** at the second floor of the front elevation, the applicant proposes to remove the railing and install Juliet balconies at the windows; the iron work on the balconies would mimic the detail of the railing to be removed;

**WHEREAS** the applicant plans to match exactly the detailing and organization of the front elevation;

**WHEREAS** at the front elevation would be replaced with in-kind wood windows;

**WHEREAS** at the front elevation, the applicant proposes to create a small areaway at the ground in order to create a more generous front door height that would present as a more appropriately scaled door;

**WHEREAS** the proposed new areaway, with a new front garden and would be set 15 1/2 inches below street level, would be surrounded by a 42” high wrought iron fence; the new areaway would be within the property line;

**WHEREAS** the existing windows at the ground floor have wrought iron window gratings; the window gratings would be restored and made longer to accommodate the proposed longer windows in the area way;

**WHEREAS** to summarize where limestone would be inserted as the replacement fabric on the front elevation: a) the existing brownstone rusticated base with painted yellow stucco to be replaced with limestone b) all existing brownstone header detail now painted yellow, will be restored in kind with limestone c) all existing brownstone bands now painted with yellow stucco to be replaced with limestone d) existing brownstone coved cornice now painted yellow to be replaced with limestone cornice e) existing brown window casings and sills now painted yellow stucco to be replaced with white hammered limestone f) all existing brownstone wall panels painted yellow to be replaced with limestone g) existing brownstone wall panels painted with gray stucco to be replaced with limestone h) all brownstone sills painted with yellow stucco to be replaced with limestone h) existing brick pilasters painted yellow to be replaced with limestone i) existing brick arcade painted yellow to be replaced with limestone arches j) existing brownstone cornice painted with yellow stucco to be replaced with a limestone cornice;

**WHEREAS** at the rear elevation the applicant proposes to reconfigure and reduce the non-conformity of the existing 2-story extension by removing the 2nd story; the windows of the one-story extension that remains will mimic in design the pointed arched windows at the 5th floor of the front elevation;

**WHEREAS** at the rear elevation, the applicant proposes to pull out the facade for floors 3, 4, and 5 for a total of 1200 sq. ft. or 430 sq. Ft. at each floor;

**WHEREAS** at the rear elevation, the applicant proposes to retain the existing brick cladding;

**WHEREAS** at the rear elevation at the 5th floor, the applicant proposes to introduce a curved parapet;

**WHEREAS** at the rear elevation, the applicant proposes to introduce a copper clad divided-light bay window; the copper will be lead coated and over time will turn a dark gray;

**WHEREAS** at the rear elevation, the existing windows will be replaced with in-kind metal clad wood windows;

**WHEREAS** proposed changes to the fabric of front elevation — the proposed new limestone using different textures — diminishes the intent of the original Bottomley-designed front elevation for the Warburg residence;

**WHEREAS** the applicant's premise is wrong; the replacement of the front elevation with different forms of limestone provides a "ghostlike" remembrance of the original brownstone building;

**WHEREAS** the house was/is dark; the dark color is a character defining element; the proposed limestone replacement fails to capture the truly exotic qualities of the building;

**WHEREAS** the existing front elevation is memorable; the new proposed radical replacement elevation is pallid and completely steps away from the original design; William Lawrence Bottomley kept the brownstone and made the color/texture contrasts pronounced to provide whimsy and distinction to his neo-medieval façade;

### **THIS RESOLUTION WAS VOTED ON IN TWO PARTS**

**PART A:** All work at the rear elevation, the addition of a front area way, the extension in height of the front door, replacement of the 2nd floor iron railing with Juliet balconies.

At the Full Board meeting of Community Board 8 Manhattan held on April 22, 2020, the board unanimously approved **PART A** of the resolution by a vote of 42 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstention, and 0 not voting for cause.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that Part A of this application, all proposed work to be done at 34-36 East 70th Street, with the exception of the proposed new limestone cladding at the front elevation is **APPROVED** as presented.

**PART B:** The proposed replacement of the existing cladding at the front elevation with different textures of limestone.

At the Full Board meeting of Community Board 8 Manhattan held on April 22, 2020, the board approved **PART B** of the resolution by a vote of 27 in favor, 15 opposed, 0 abstention, and 0 not voting for cause.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that Part B of this application, the proposed limestone replacement cladding for the front elevation, is **DISAPPROVED** as presented.

Please advise us of any action taken on this matter.

Sincerely,

*Alida Camp*

Alida Camp  
Chair

*David Helpern and Jane Parshall*

David Helpern and Jane Parshall  
Co-Chairs, Landmarks Committee

cc: Honorable Bill de Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York  
Honorable Carolyn Maloney, 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Representative  
Honorable Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Honorable Liz Krueger, NYS Senator, 28<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District  
Honorable Dan Quart, NYS Assembly Member, 73<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District  
Honorable Rebecca Seawright, NYS Assembly Member 76<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
Honorable Ben Kallos, NYC Council Member, 5<sup>th</sup> Council District  
Honorable Keith Powers, NYC Council Member, 4<sup>th</sup> Council District