



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Design Commission  
Loeb Boathouse, Central Park  
November 15, 2010**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness design review committee wishes to comment on the application to reconstruct the bar pavilion, a shed and an adjacent site work at the Loeb Boathouse, within Central Park, an English Romantic style public park designed by Olmsted and Vaux in 1856, and designated a Scenic Landmark.

LANDMARK WEST! first reviewed this project on September 14, 2010, almost exactly two months ago. The design at that time could only be categorized as “‘Anywhere, USA’ goes for ‘downtown chic’”. An ultra-white color palette and selection of reflective finishes was totally antithetical to the *ruse in urbe* character—that is, imbuing the urban *city* with the rusticity of the *country*—that defines Central Park. In direct meetings with the applicant, and appearances before our local Manhattan Community Board 7 and before the Landmarks Preservation Commission, we urged the applicant to abandon this inappropriate treatment and to use, rather, dark tones and rustic materials to complement the Loeb Boathouse.

Designed by Stuart Constable in 1954, the Boathouse’s long and low silhouette and use of bricks and stone—rustic materials—harmonize with the surrounding environment. Satellite buildings added later, such as the bar in question, the ticket booth and a utilitarian shed, are constructed in dark tones and wood, to both blend into the larger context of the Boathouse and its surroundings, and not compete with the prominence of the Boathouse.

The design as presented today has evolved since that mid-September review. By modifying the materials selection—from aluminum to wood, from glass to copper—the reconstructed bar no longer competes with the Loeb Boathouse, nor does it falsely read as an extension thereof. Instead, it is distinctly separate and secondary. Yet for all their intentions, modified dressings do nothing if the design itself remains inappropriate. The bar’s design recalls, first, a suburban mall kiosk and, second, a beach-side rest station. But at no point a neo-Victorian pavilion befitting Central Park.

LANDMARK WEST! thanks the applicant for their serious consideration of both our committee’s comments as well as those of the LPC. We believe that the design of the reconstructed bar has been well-served by the public review process, but that the need for further design revision remains.