



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

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**West End Avenue Historic District
Statement for Town Hall Event
Thursday, May 14, 2009**

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

LW! has long supported a West End Avenue Historic District that encompasses the parade of apartment buildings that give this residential boulevard its distinct vista and sense of place. First and foremost, we applaud the West End Preservation Society (WEPS). Without question, their impassioned, grassroots community organizing and fundraising efforts have been essential to the sustained momentum of this campaign.

It is just this kind of feisty, collaborative, “ground up” advocacy that succeeded in achieving historic district designation for the Riverside-West End Historic District in 1989, and the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District in 1990. Both are key examples of the value of landmark protection, and both were early victories in the life of LW!. Since those successes, the Landmarks Preservation Commission has only designated one other historic district on the Upper West Side—a small group of rowhouses on Manhattan Avenue (in 2006).

The UWS/CPW Historic District in particular sets an important precedent. While individual gems stand along Central Park West, as do singular buildings on West End Avenue, it is the avenue as a whole, and the stories it tells, that makes it truly significant. Indeed, that Central Park West is designated in its entirety, from 62nd to 96th Street—not in hopscotching pockets—gives it strength. The same holds true for West End Avenue.

LW! echoes Prof. Andrew Dolkart, the “architect” of the document which has brought us all together this evening, in proclaiming that “West End Avenue is one of the streets that define residential New York.” With its character and integrity under immediate threat, landmark protection is as important as ever for West End Avenue. Recent history has proven that West End Avenue is not exempt from inappropriate and insensitive change. Significant yet unprotected buildings have been badly altered and in some instances risk outright destruction.

Because of historic district designation, nearly 2,700 buildings across the Upper West Side, and a total of 25,000 throughout the city are protected architectural treasures for New Yorkers and visitors alike to appreciate. At the same time, with the guidance of the Landmarks Commission and active participation from the community, they have continued to mature and change—all the while, respecting the historic foundations on which contemporary modifications find their footing. West End Avenue deserves this same kind of stewardship and protection.

LW! continues to support WEPS and our West Side neighbors in urging the Landmarks Commission to calendar the proposed West End Avenue Historic District as soon as possible. With landmark protection, the entire avenue will be protected, not only for us but for future generations.