

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
309 West 80th Street
April 8, 2008**

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

The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the application to construct rooftop and rear yard additions on this neo-Gothic/Renaissance style rowhouse building designed by Charles H. Israels and built in 1894.

Rear Yard Addition

As part of the pitch to win approval for this proposal, the applicant has stated that the demolition of the existing extension and redesign of the rear façade will result in a net gain in rear yard open space.

The rear yard open space may be increasing in square footage, but it is also decreasing in “cubage”, that is to say *the volume of open space*. It is for this reason that we object to the proposed rear yard addition. The rear yard open space is a critical element of the upper Manhattan’s development pattern, which is typically a system of solid bulk (forming the street wall) that rings a green respite, the void. As we have stated many times, it is the Commission’s responsibility to protect the integrity of the block interior—the void—from inappropriate development. Hemmed between West End Avenue and a bend in Riverside Drive, this block has a 326 foot street wall on West 80th Street and is one of the Upper West Side’s shortest blocks. So, by design, more of the rear yard open space is cast in shadow when compared to other blocks, a situation that should be considered when adding on to neighboring structures.

As part of this proposal, the Commission must also consider the severe impact on the neighboring rowhouse, 307 West 80th Street. The applicant’s gain will be this neighbor’s loss as its rear yard will be reduced to a sun-starved alley, wedged between a large apartment building and the proposed addition.

Rooftop Addition

Because this proposal is part of the overall scheme to bulk up this century-old structure and overshadow the block’s small rear yard, we also object to the rooftop addition.

To conclude, we also recommend the applicant consider restoring the parapet cornice that graced this structure’s front facade in the 1930s tax photo.