

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
15 West 68<sup>th</sup> Street  
June 2, 2009**

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 applications to modify a window opening to accommodate an at-grade entrance; and to request that the LPC issue a report to the City Planning Commission relating to an application for a Modification of Use pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution, at 15 West 68<sup>th</sup> Street, a Beaux Arts-style rowhouse designed by Buchman & Fox and built in 1909-10.

First, our committee addresses the proposal for window modification. In short, we find the proposed work to be inappropriate, as it would necessitate the removal of original building fabric. Any non-restorative work at No. 15 should be reversible. This high-end, private club is an untested use, not only on the Upper West Side but in all of New York City. Thus, no permanent alterations should be made to facilitate a new use of undetermined viability. Approving even a small intervention such as this would open the door to more which, as a whole, would incrementally eat away at this historic building.

We estimate that one need take but two vertical steps to reach the level of the existing façade opening. Given our understanding of the intended use of the building, the frequency with which at-grade entry will be utilized at No. 15 does not justify such extreme action. A removable ramp would meet the occasional needs of the applicant and obviate the need to destroy this townhouse's façade. Our Committee urges the Commission to deny this first application for 15 West 68<sup>th</sup> Street.

Next, we look to the application for a 74-711 for the purpose of modification of use.

Years of neglect have left No. 15 in a serious state of disrepair, putting the new owner in the position of playing catch-up. But like restoring a dusty find from an antique shop, the process of cleaning and restoration, of bringing the life and luster back to this gem of a landmark, is a reward in and of itself. Maintaining the building in a state of good repair is the legal responsibility of the applicant, and though that necessitates a multi-phase effort on their part in this case, it should not necessarily persuade the Commission into supporting the proposal for modified use.

Innumerable applications for restorative work are approved at staff-level on a regular basis. Only very rarely on the Upper West Side—three times since 1994, to be exact—is this work packaged as part of a 74-711 application. That is to say: restoring a building to a state of good repair is routine. Though multi-pronged, the restoration program proposed here is simply what one “should” do.

LANDMARK WEST! opposes the 74-711 application for modified use proposed for 15 West 68<sup>th</sup> Street. By denying the proposal, the Commission will remind applicants that the bar for restorative work is a high one, **(still working out this final thought ...)**