



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
303 West 90th Street
January 20, 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 application to construct a rear yard and rooftop additions on this Elizabethan Renaissance-style rowhouse, designed by Clarence True and built in 1898-99.

Eight buildings situated on the corner of West 90th Street and West End Avenue, including 303 West 90th Street, pay homage to the legacy of prolific Upper West Side residential architect Clarence True. On the facades, stepped gables and richly decorated curving fronts enliven the streetscape. The rear yards and façades prove no less provocative and are no less deserving of our protection. Architecturally significant features and historically significant building layout must not be compromised by new additions. Our Committee feels that today's application would do so, and is thus inappropriate.

A central feature of the rear façade of 303 West 90th Street is an original, pressed-metal bay window. This same feature carries across the facades of its westerly neighbors, Numbers 305 and 307. The applicant's proposal, if approved, means the destruction of this delightful feature, and the corruption of the rear façades' cohesion.

In addition, the chamfered corner of the building's rear façade must be protected. By averting a hard right angle, the chamfered corner allows the penetration of addition light and air to the deepest corner of these buildings' rear yards. Looking beyond the individual rowhouse at 303 West 90th Street to the larger ensemble of which it is a part is important on this topic. Upon review of satellite imagery of this collection of buildings, the zig-zagging building walls are immediately striking. As much as architecture is historically significant and to be protected, so is site planning.

Regarding the proposed rooftop addition, we find the current design to be overwhelming of the diminutive rowhouse structure. It reads as top-heavy and is inappropriate for this rowhouse.

The unique siting of 303 West 90th Street is not a problem to overcome but a distinction to be treasured. We ask the applicant to rethink their modifications, and urge the Commission to deny this application.