



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
312 West 88th Street
October 21st, 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 at 312 West 88th Street, a Flemish Revival-style rowhouse designed by Joseph H. Taft and built in 1889-90.

Architectural historian Andrew S. Dolkart has noted that the rowhouses of the Riverside – West End Historic District constitute a dynamic collection of rich texture and striking silhouettes.¹ The row of houses at 304-314 West 88th Street are excellent examples of these architectural qualities. Enlivened by stepped gables and pitched roofs, they typify the architecture of the West End area, which once had a large number of neo-Flemish rowhouses. The restoration of Number 312 will go a long way towards reunifying the houses at 304-314 West 88th Street.

Though the façade restoration of this rowhouse is not included in the proposal before us today, our Committee feels that its thoroughness and sensitivity to historical precedent merit commendation. Through exploratory probing and testing, original materials have been clearly identified and will be restored and reproduced to bring the front façade back to its historic character.

Rooftop Addition

At present, the strong roofline of 304-314 West 88th Street is interrupted by the gaping hole created by Number 312's absent roof. Though the proposed rooftop addition is clearly visible, in this instance it is appropriate. By reconstructing the pitched roof, the applicant will restore the broken roofline and Number 312.

We are pleased that the applicant proposes to layer a diamond-shaped tile rather than employ a one-dimensional roofing alternative, such as a singular expanse of metal or asphalt. As we've already noted, the texture of these rowhouses is one of their defining characteristics. The overlay of the roof tiles will again provide this rowhouse with just such a textural quality.

Over, please

¹ Andrew S. Dolkart. "Supplemental Research Material on the Proposed Riverside – West End Historic District," prepared for LANDMARK WEST!, April 1987.



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Rear Yard Addition

In light of LANDMARK WEST's ongoing concerns about rear yard encroachment, we are concerned about the significant open space in the rear yard "doughnut" that would be consumed by this proposed addition. The proposed addition restores the yard's depth to the thirty-foot minimum required by zoning by retreating four feet back. However, this is coupled with the enlargement of the extension to full-width.

The new addition constitutes the rearranging of 50 square feet and the creation of another 45 square feet – not an insignificant amount, considering the small size of this and other rowhouse rear yards. Such an addition would perpetuate the steady erosion of the historic footprint and openness of rowhouse midblock interiors. We urge the Commission to take this under careful consideration.

Regarding the design of the addition, our Committee is pleased to see much of the original building fabric being preserved. Further, the applicant proposes to clean and reuse original brick as much as possible, as well as maintain original façade openings.