



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
329 Columbus Avenue
February 15, 2011**

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 install signage at 329 Columbus Avenue, the La Rochelle, a Renaissance Revival-style apartment building, designed by Lamb & Rich and built in 1895-98.

Commercial practicality and design appropriateness, in the case of a landmark building, are not mutually exclusive. Finding a meeting of these two concerns was the challenge placed before the ownership of the Make Meaning store. The practical desire to increase visibility has been sought while maintaining a strict attention to design sensitivity and appropriateness.

Over several weeks, LANDMARK WEST! has communicated with the applicant regarding their proposal. We are pleased to report that their receptive attitude toward public input and collaboration with neighbors has resulted in significant improvements to their original sign proposal. Whereas upon our first review, the applicant proposed a sterile grey sign band, overpowering letters and positioning askew from the rest of the building's storefronts, today their application is deferential to the La Rochelle's monumental architecture.

LANDMARK WEST! Alternative Concept

Our recommendation to the applicant was to simplify the traditional sign band—be different! In lieu of a solid sign band, we suggested horizontal bars, curved or bowed out away from the storefront—but not to break the plane of neighboring Duane Reade's signage. This, we observed, would not significantly depart from the dominant signage pattern established by the adjacent drugstore but, rather, improve upon it. Upon the horizontal bars could be mounted the Make Meaning lettering.

LW! Concept Interpreted

The applicant's interpretation of this recommendation is before you today: a single bar upon which individual letters will be mounted, and this bar to be sharply angled from behind the La Rochelle's columns. Whether this strict angle is appropriate, versus a more graceful curve or bow, we're eager to hear from the Commissioners on this point. The proposed mounting scheme

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appears to respond to LANDMARK WEST's early concerns regarding connecting signage via the columns (as is the case at the neighboring Duane Reade store). Doing so, we commented, limits one's reading of these tremendous columns, and we're pleased to see that the design acknowledges this point.

Zoning Resolution Compliance

While a design may meet the standard of appropriateness in terms of landmark review, LANDMARK WEST! would certainly not want to endorse a project knowing that it might not be in compliance with the regulatory code of another city agency. When analyzing the proposed signage alongside the Zoning Resolution, it came to our attention that the Make Meaning signage may exceed the allowable height (3 feet for C1-8 zoning districts) by a few inches. An easy fix, but one that should be addressed prior to issuing a permit and, subsequently, Department of Buildings review.

LANDMARK WEST! thanks the applicant for their collaborative spirit. We do not oppose the application as presented today.