

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
427 Amsterdam Avenue
May 3, 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 427 Amsterdam Avenue, a one-story commercial building built in 1937.

The architecture of “taxpayers” is interesting. Taxpayers—that is, these unassuming buildings that dot our streetscape, erected for the sole purpose of covering property tax costs with the intent of replacing the building later with something bigger and better—thought to be temporary, but have now ingrained themselves into the fabric of our city.

The small storefront at 427 Amsterdam Avenue is a perfect example of a taxpayer. No architect of record; no excessive ornamentation (why invest the money and labor, when the building is meant to come down in the near future?). But this taxpayer of 1937 vintage has a certain understated, bare-bones elegance that is to be appreciated.

Our Committee believes that the current unadorned façade is appropriate for this building. Naked-eye investigation reveals that the cast stone has already been scarred by the removal of previous signs or lighting. The individual letters of the proposed “Momoya” sign call for a series of new holes to be drilled into the original cast stone. Certainly, there are less invasive signage alternatives. LANDMARK WEST! questions whether there is not a sensitive alternative for signage at Momoya.

The Spartan storefront is a minimalist “frame”, with the restaurant windows comprising the contents. Our recommendation: preserve the frame as-is, and focus proposed signage in the content space, the windows. In doing so, the applicant can preserve the cast stone and more directly impact the pedestrian experience.