



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
55 Central Park West
December 9, 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 additions at 55 Central Park West, an Art Deco-style apartment building designed by Schwartz & Gross and built in 1930.

The Art Deco apartment houses of Central Park West (of which there are 6) are iconic symbols of the Upper West Side. Soaring verticality is a hallmark of their design, and is achieved in part by their propensity for continual building setbacks. These inward steps the building takes as it climbs skyward are essential to its design. What has come to be termed the “wedding cake” effect is definitive of many Art Deco buildings, and 55 Central Park West is of no exception.

Rooftop Addition: 19th Story

55 Central Park West is neighbored to the South by the diminutive Holy Trinity Church, leaving the South façade entirely exposed from the 9th floor up. The proposed addition at the 19th story would be entirely visible from West 65th Street and portions of both West 66th Street and Central Park West. This is inappropriate. Building out the 19th story setback would clearly interrupt the rhythmic “up and in” of the building’s rooflines that is so important to its character.

Precedence becomes an important issue here: If the Commission approves this setback’s infill, what is to stop the residents of the 11th, 13th, 15th, or 17th floors, where the secondary facades’ other setbacks occur, from proposing the same thing? Or residents of the Art Deco-style Century or Majestic apartments, for that matter? Little by little, setback by setback, the stepped quality of 55 Central Park West and other apartments could disappear. We urge the Commission to deny this first of the two rooftop additions proposed on this important principle.

QUESTION FOR THE COMMITTEE: Do we want to discuss materials (that we were not provided enough information to deem them appropriate or not) if we’re opposing this first addition in a global sense already? Please advise.

Rooftop Addition: 20th Story

The applicant also proposes an addition on the 20th story. Our Committee agrees that this addition’s visibility is so minimal – not until one stands 375 feet within Central Park does the new roofline begin to appear – that it would not adversely affect the building’s historic character.