



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
56 West 66th Street – First Battery Armory
February 17th, 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 modify and legalize rooftop mechanical equipment at 56 West 66th Street, the First Battery Armory, designed by Horgan & Slattery and built in 1900-03.

The First Battery Armory is the first of two applications for legalization on the Upper West Side to be heard by the Commission today. Before weighing in on the specifics of this application, our Committee is compelled to remind the Commissioners about the dangers of legalization. With every after-the-fact permission of illegal alterations to landmark buildings, the Commission is teaching property owners a terrible lesson: Do the work you want without permission, *then* apply for legalization.

We recognize that circumstances can arise which call for emergency work. However, even at those times, property owners must not forget the delicate architectural resources to which they are stewards. Immediately notifying the Commission's staff of unavoidable emergency work is so important. Without this communication, violations can be drawn out for years, as is the case with the Armory, and even decades, as a forthcoming agenda item is evidence.

The proposed rooftop mechanical equipment at the First Battery Armory would be a clear improvement upon the current conditions. The twenty-six inch drop in equipment height will lower the units' profile, rendering them less visible from the public way. Regarding siting, all can agree that the prominent turreted head house is a less than ideal location for any rooftop structure on the Armory. However, it is our understanding that the applicant has thoroughly explored alternative rooftop locations and unit configurations, including siting them separately atop the roof. No alternate scenarios seemingly available, we do not disapprove of this proposal.

As the architect informed LANDMARK WEST! at our meeting, air cooling technology tends to exist in a thirty year cycle. With that in mind, our Committee holds out hope that in three decades' time a more compact unit will come to replace these models.