



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
56 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street  
November 24<sup>th</sup>, 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 alter the façade and areaway, and to replace windows at 56 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street, a Renaissance Revival-style row house designed by Thom & Wilson and built in 1891-92.

Our Committee appreciates the applicant and their architect's attitude toward community consultation and collaboration on this project. When asked to present to our Committee, the architect requested the earliest date possible, so as to allow for discussion, modification of plans and further discussion. This is exactly the kind of spirit on which historic preservation advocacy can thrive! Thanks to early consultation, our feedback was able to make significant improvements in the proposed design for 56 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street.

Next time the architect or homeowner anticipates filing an application for work at this or another landmarked Upper West Side location, we hope they'll push this proactive perspective even further and contact us during their preliminary discussions. The earlier we can all come to the table together to discuss what is best for our historic resources and our neighborhood, the better!

We recognize that, following our Committee's site visit to No. 56 at the beginning of the month, the architect has modified the project in response to our input. For example, a member of our Committee noted that windows on the third floor appear to retain their original brickmolds. The architect agreed that these can, should and will be used to test for appropriate color of windows at the openings below.

However, points of concern persist and we bring these to the attention of the Commission today:

**Areaway: Layout**

To talk about the façade and areaway of 56 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street without addressing its missing stoop is like ignoring an elephant in the room. Just a few short weeks ago, when testifying in regards to a stoop restoration on nearby West 69<sup>th</sup> Street, LANDMARK WEST! spoke about the domino effect. That is, the phenomenon of one person doing the right thing—restoring their stoop to its original glory—and others seeing the benefit to the streetscape and following suit. It can happen on West 70<sup>th</sup> Street, and No. 56 is perfectly poised as a catalyst. We continue to urge the applicant to broaden their project to include a full stoop restoration.

*Over, please*

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Lacking the adoption of a full stoop restoration, requesting permission to expand the size of the row house's areaway—now more diminutive in keeping with its modified neighbors—is entirely inappropriate. A large areaway is clearly part and parcel of the row house's original stoop layout. The applicant is asking for a yard but only giving an inch. As presented, we do not support the proposal for an expanded areaway without the incorporation of a full stoop restoration.

## **Areaway: Fencing**

At the time of our site visit, the architect had proposed to perpetuate a non-historic metal railing at No. 56. We are glad to see that since then, he has revisited his plans, looked to one of the building's twins in its ABAB... rhythm (No. 48, in particular), and is now proposing a stone areaway fence.

## **Façade**

Regarding the proposal to remove the paint currently marring the building's façade, our Committee finds the architect's plans appropriate.

## **Replacement of Windows**

Regarding the replacement of the non-original windows at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor level, our Committee finds the configuration and operation of those proposed to be appropriate. We would encourage the applicant to consider laminate in lieu of double-pane, however, as that would allow for a more streamlined profile. On the parlor level, the proposed replacement windows are also appropriate for this Thom & Wilson row house. We simply reiterate our discussion of color testing of third floor windows to ensure the appropriate finish for all the replacement windows mentioned here.

Thanks to an open dialogue between the homeowner, their architect and the concerned members of our design review committee, we believe the proposal for 56 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street has greatly improved. We hope that further commentary from the Commission today will give the proposal the extra push it needs to really go the distance in bringing this row house full circle to its original glory.