



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

## **DRAFT**

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
67, 69, 71, and 73 West 71<sup>st</sup> Street  
September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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 this application to install new storefront infill, install a storefront at number 67, and construct rear yard additions at numbers 67 and 69.

Our committee's comments relate first to the proposal for storefront infill and alterations and, secondly, to the proposal for rear yard construction.

### **Storefronts**

From the first floor up, these four Thom & Wilson rowhouses stand as proud examples of the neo-Grec style – their windows crisply punched, their lintels classically restrained. At the basement level, however, discontinuity runs rampant. This applicant proposes to unify the four commercial spaces.

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The project architect was not forthcoming with information for this proposal, and likewise did not provide materials samples for public review. That said, our Committee is unable to support the new storefront infill without knowing more about the proposed materials.

#### **NOTE FOR THE COMMITTEE:**

I can report that the storefronts are to be stucco, but do not know about the bulkheads.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE:**

Is the proposal for the storefronts positive in that it is adding continuity to the principal façade?  
OR

Is the idea of one streamlined treatment problematic? Even if there are stylistic connections, should the storefronts be treated as individual units to reflect the four individual rowhouses behind them?

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## **Rear Yard Infill**

We recognize that the rear yard additions – a goliath misnomer for these side-by-side, full-depth single-story structures – are permitted by the Zoning Resolution (see Article III, Chapter 3, sub-heading 33-301). Regardless, green lighting this massive concrete slab is irresponsible urban policy – period. Look to the architect’s own photodocumentation of the rear yard: amidst the brick and stone buildings, a tree offers respite and shade for humans and animals alike and helps to cool the air. Green spaces such as this are increasingly fewer, not only on the Upper West Side, but in Manhattan and across the five boroughs, as encroachment gradually eats up our precious terra firma.

It is the responsibility of the Commission to take a stand against such brazen and cognizant de-valorization of rowhouse rear yards, if not for environmental reasons than because the rear yard is one of the hallmarks of rowhouse spatial layout. The front stoops and areaways of these four rowhouses have already been compromised and, for the passerby, read less and less as residential rowhouse structures. Whether the use of the lower levels has been altered from its original intent or not, the fact remains that these buildings were, historically, residential spaces. The rear yards are one of the last indications of this and should not be compromised to accommodate contemporary non-characteristic use.

### **NOTE TO THE COMMITTEE:**

The need for this massive rear yard extension is unclear, but zoning seems to permit it:

*Zoning Resolution Article III, Chapter 3: 33-30 (Special Provisions for Rear Yards)*

33-301: Within one hundred feet of corners

In all districts, as indicated (**C1 for this application**), no rear yard shall be required within 100 feet of the point of intersection of two street lines intersecting at an angle of 135 degrees or less.