

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Tavern on the Green
February 21, 2012**

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 demolish existing additions, construct a new addition, modify masonry openings, replace infill, install HVAC equipment, and modify landscape at the Tavern on the Green. A Victorian Gothic-style building, Tavern on the Green was designed by architect Jacob Wrey Mould and built in 1870-1871, within the English Romantic-style Central Park, a Scenic Landmark designed in 1856 by Olmsted and Vaux.

Tavern on the Green: For decades, the name brought to one's mind mirror-lined walls and, of course, the Crystal Room. But as that era of over-the-top glitz has passed, Tavern on the Green is now poised for a new phase in its long architectural history. According to the Dept. of Parks & Recreation-issued Request for Proposals (RFP), a casual dining destination for park users, city strollers ... everyone!

On "shell and core" restoration

With this transition, LANDMARK WEST! is pleased to see the building's restoration needs being addressed. Over dozens of years, the footprint of the Tavern on the Green gradually increased to accommodate larger private parties and seat more guests. Slowly but surely, the historic Jacob Wrey Mould-designed core was swallowed up by expanded kitchen facilities to the West and South, along with additional dining areas encased in greenhouse-like glass on the South and, famously, to the East in the form of the Crystal Room. With the removal of these egregious additions, the Tavern on the Green can once again breathe. And, perhaps more importantly, the public can fully experience and appreciate its architectural beauty in the landscape. Our Committee supports the removal of these additions.

On the proposed East facade addition

The restoration of the Tavern on the Green to its former glory is an incredible contribution to the long history of this site. However, that restoration alone is not "enough" and that an addition is also proposed is predictable. LW! is not opposed to new design at the Tavern on the Green site in principle, but a legendary destination and a handsomely designed building such as this deserves something far more sympathetic; a quietly masterful note of our time. The pavilion proposed is a hefty glass-and-metal box that does nothing but hide what is most exciting about the building's primary facade: the East-facing central bay. The pavilion creates harsh angles with the northern and southern wings -- clear indications that such a greatly projecting addition is not harmonious with the historic building.

We understand the parking lot is not a component of the current application, and we must object to this piecemeal consideration of the Tavern on the Green site. As diners will not have use of the parking lot, nor will it be required for deliveries, the lot no longer relates to the building it was constructed to serve.

Though LANDMARK WEST! is thrilled about the strides being made toward restoring the Tavern on the Green, we must all ensure this work is not in vain. Approving the proposed addition opens the door to insensitive additions in years to come, and the Tavern on the Green begins down the slippery slope from which it is presently recovering. The proposed addition is inappropriate to the historic Tavern on the Green building and the Scenic Landmark setting. We urge the Commission to deny the addition.