



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
116 West 71st Street
July 22, 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 a rear yard addition and a rooftop stair bulkhead, and to excavate the rear yard at 116 West 71st Street, a Renaissance Revival-style rowhouse designed by Thom & Wilson and built in 1883-84.

Rear Yard Addition

Section 2-16 of the Commission's Rules is meant to indicate when a proposal for a rear yard addition exceeds the purview of the staff, necessitating full-Commission approval. When an application surpasses so many of the standards it establishes, the Commission should be alerted to a proposal that reaches above and beyond what is appropriate for a rowhouse in a designated historic district.

The applicant proposes to remove the existing rear façade elevation's crowning corbeled brickwork. This is in direct opposition to four of Section 2-16's criteria. First, "g," which allows for Certificate of No Effect issuance "in buildings with rear cornices, corbeled brickwork on the parapet, or other distinctive roof silhouettes [where] the rear addition does not rise to the full height of the building." Secondly, criterion "b," in which no significant architectural features [of the rear façade] ... would be lost or damaged as a result of the construction of the addition" is surpassed. Equally, the full-width and full-height nature of the proposal would result in a loss of a tremendous amount of original fabric – criterion "h" would be fully disregarded.

Finally, this application would also transgress criterion "e." The proposal, if realized, would entirely erase the fenestration of the rowhouse and replace it with an aesthetic not at all in keeping with its type. In short, and in contradiction to criterion "e," the rear of the building will retain *neither* the scale *nor* the character of an individual rowhouse. We recommend a wholesale rethinking of the design for this rear façade.

Rear Yard Encroachment

Much as the simple punched-masonry fenestration that characterizes this rear façade and those of its neighbors will be eliminated with the approval of this application, so will additional rear yard space with the intrusion of a rear yard addition. The Committee wishes to reiterate its point, made at other hearings in the past and to be made again here today, that midblock rear yards are an historical element worthy of preservation. Encroachments by additions which reduce the area



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of open space in the rear yard, such as this one does, are fundamentally inappropriate. We urge the Commission to take this into serious consideration.

Rooftop Projections

(Written prior to submission of photos – will revise according to Committee’s feedback)

Regarding the proposed rooftop components, the applicant has not provided our Committee with enough information regarding dimensions and visibility. Plans include not only the stair bulkhead but vertical extensions to existing chimneys and new HVAC units –alterations not denoted in their Certificate of Appropriateness application. Until these discrepancies are resolved, we are unable to support this proposal.