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The Real Estate

Upper West Side Synagogue, Preservationists Square Off Again

BY MARK WELLBORN

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TAGS: REAL ESTATE, CONDOS, HOUSING, UPPER WEST SIDE

The battle between Congregation Shearith Israel and Landmark West is set to rage once again.

For those who aren't up to date with Upper West Side land-use gossip, here's the skinny:

Upper West Side synagogue Congregation Shearith Israel wants to build a new community house at 8 West 70th Street, and then build five stories of luxury condos on top. Shearith Israel claims that the new building is necessary in order to address "the physical obsolescence and the ill-configured floorplans" of the current structure. Landmark West, an Upper West Side community group, has led the opposition to the development largely because they feel Shearith Israel could easily rebuild the community house without the condominium floors, and thus not violate any zoning laws.

"In 2006, Shearith Israel was told by the Landmarks Commission that because there was no preservation purpose to their project, it did not merit special permits for construction," Landmark West executive director Kate Wood told *The Observer*. "Now, they are taking this design and going to the Board of Standards and Appeals in hopes of getting variances to begin construction. Shearith could build a community house and wouldn't need to get any special variances. Instead, what they want to do is add the condos and that becomes their money maker."

The sparks will really start to fly on June 20 when Community Board 7's Land-Use Committee will hold a meeting to discuss Shearith Israel's application for the eight variances needed. Be there or be square.

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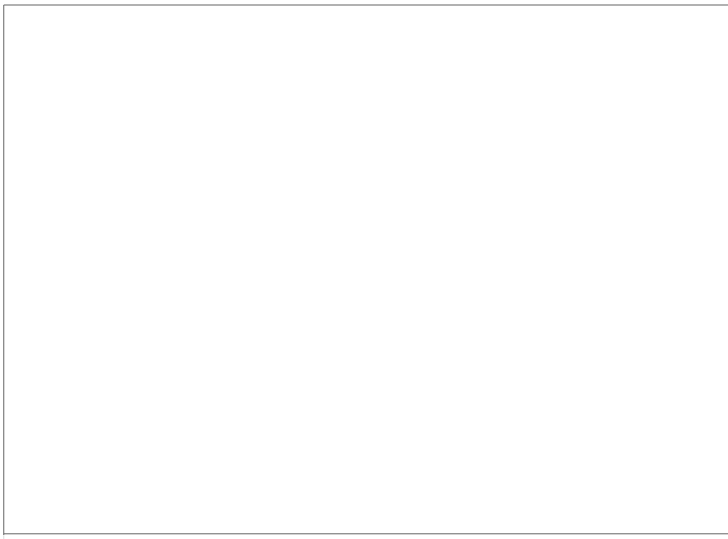
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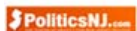
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