

Dear Kate:

The Coalition for a Livable West Side is writing to express our strong opposition to the proposal for a 19-story tower (157 feet plus 2 to 3 stories for the rooftop mechanicals) on West 70th Street between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue. We know that the proposal calls for a 14-story building but in reality, it would be equivalent to 16 stories plus the floors for the mechanicals. That alone should raise the hackles of anyone interested in preserving the mid-block character of the West Side and the Upper West Side Historic District.

We oppose the proposal because it is a prime example of "spot zoning". Communities on the East Side won an historic victory which reinforced the maintenance of mid-block zoning. Approval of this project would be a violation of that decision.

At Community Board 7's Landmark Committee meeting, the attorney representing Congregation Shearith Israel, left unanswered many important questions.

He was asked if the developer of the condo units would have to adhere to the design presented for approval. His answer, "No".

The basic approach that evening, was that the community should be thrilled that the old 41-story cantilevered proposal - which died a natural death - was not being proposed again.

Community Board 7 was asked to support "a pig in a poke", it did not! Now the Landmarks Commission is being asked to support a plan that could be changed after approval is received. If the Commission approves this "holding proposal", what is to prevent the developer of the site from adding height to the building from the rear yard extension and/or the unused square footage?

Congregation Shearith Israel does wonderful work but it should not use this awful proposal to fund (a one-time infusion of cash) its worthwhile projects.

The Coalition for a Livable West Side fully supports the existing mid-block zoning which protects the low-rise character of neighborhoods and we oppose all attempts to circumvent that zoning.

We urge you to do everything in your power to help preserve and protect our community by opposing this ill-conceived project.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Polayes
President