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January 28, 2003

Ms. Amanda Burden, Chairperson  
City Planning Commission  
22 Reade Street  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Application of the Spanish and Portugese Synagogue

Dear Ms. Burden:

I am the president of the West 69th Street Block Association (the Association). The Association has been in existence for more than 30 years. We are concerned with our neighborhood and the life styles of our residents.

The block association consists of all residents of West 69th Street between Central Park West and Broadway. As such we have a constituency of approximately 1500! members. Our Board of Directors (a 34 person Steering Committee) met on Wednesday January 22, 2003. A resolution was unanimously passed that directed me to write to you to express our displeasure, lack of support and total opposition to any variance, waiver, special permit or Certificate of Appropriateness to permit the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (SAPS) to erect any structure more than 5 stories tall on West 70th Street. I remind you that this is a historic district with a very specific low rise zoning that was years in study, creation and adoption. It is that zoning you would tear asunder without any basis or rationale.

It appears to us that over the years, Landmarks and City Planning has abrogated its authority to any developer seeking a variance. The Upper West Side, which has been a cradle and test tube of housing experimentation has been the guinea pig for non conforming uses far too long. We have been the subject of massive development by those who neither consider the community nor its design sensitivities, of which they are a part.

To permit SAPS to erect any such structure is one more assault on our cradle of housing design and experimentation. It is one more assault on a community by violating its zoning rules, attempting to change its basic character and providing loss of light and air, adding higher traffic and higher population density, all of which are the antithesis of our zoning code.

It is time for you to protect the integrity of a community which has provided so much to the life and fabric of the City of New York. Our residents range from the unknown soul to the rich and famous. But one thing we all have in common is the spirit of community which large scale projects have destroyed by virtue of their size and the impersonal anonymity of their residents. This is a brownstone community that you are slowly destroying by permitting non conforming uses to abound all around. And these non conforming uses are not simply a minor 1-2 per cent bulk infringement but a significant assault on the whole fabric of the community.

We beg you to follow the law and not let us down. Our voice is not a solo note but part of a great chorus including our neighbors and elected officials ranging from our Borough President to our State Assemblymembers, Gottfried and Stringer. Opposition is also being voiced by major institutions as diverse as the Municipal Art Society and the Upper East Side Historic District.

Please, deny any variance.

Very truly yours,  
W. 69<sup>th</sup> Street Association



By: Ronald S. Kahn,  
President

cc: Michael Bloomberg Mayor of the City of NY By Fax: 212.788.2460	Gale Brewer City Council Member By Fax: 212.513.7717	Robert B. Tierney Landmarks Preservation Chairperson By Fax: 212.669.7960
C. Virginia Fields Manhattan Borough Pres. By Fax: 212.669.4305	Richard Gottfried NYS Assemblyman By Fax: 212.312.1494	Scott Stringer NYS Assemblyman By Fax: 212.873.6520
Tom Duane NYS Senator By Fax: 212.564.1003	Eric Schneiderman NYS Senator By Fax: 212.397.3201	Jerrold Nadler US Congressman By Fax: 212.367.7356
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