

200 West 72nd Street, New York, New York 10023 212-799-9690

Dr. Lawrence J. Cohn
Central Park West Preservation Committee
44 West 77 Street
New York, New York 10024

Robert A. M. Stern Architects Dear Dr. Cohn:

I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed construction of a twenty-three story apartment tower directly above the New York Historical Society Building. Although I am a member-for-life of the Society and deeply interested in its basic well-being, I believe that any such construction would effectively destroy an important part of New York City's heritage and call into doubt the Society's commitment to its mission as the guardian of that heritage.

The New York Historical Society Building, built by York and Sawyer and sensitively completed by Walker & Gillette, is a pure and ascetic evocation of the Classical past. It was built in an era when architects sought to closely transcribe Classical prototypes to provide New York City with monuments on a par with those of Europe and to create the expression of a public realm which the city had never before possessed.

To reduce the Society building to the role of pedestal for a tower is an insensitive and destructive attitude towards a finite design; it devalues the Upper West Side's finest exemplar of Classical Architecture. The proposed addition would destroy the original building's sensitive scale and deny its integrity.

The Historical Society is one of a series of public buildings erected at the turn of the century on Central Park West which in concert form a chain of monumental gateways to the West Side: Robert D. Kohn's Hall for the Society of Ethical Culture at 64th Street, F.R. Comstock's Second Church of Christ Scientist at 68th Street, Brunner & Tryon's Congregation Shearith Israael at 70th Street, William Potter's Church of the Divine Paternity next door to the Historical Society at 76th Street, and Carrere & Hastings's First Church of Christ Scientist at 96th Street.

These buildings remain as a testament to the low-scale Classical urbanism of the City Beautiful movement. Threatened though they are with redevelopment, they remain individually too precious to the city's urbanism and sense of its own historical evolution to allow drastic development of the kind under consideration.

Robert A. M. Stern

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Robert A. M. Stern Architects

I sincerely hope this letter may be of help to you in this matter. If I can be of further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me again.

Sincerely,



Robert A.M. Stern

RAMS:jb