

New-York Historical Society Update: Last Night's Meeting and the 280-Foot Elephant in the Room

The New-York Historical Society (N-YHS) walked into the sanctuary of the Fourth Universalist Society, packed with 400+ development-savvy New Yorkers, and tried to ignore the 280-foot elephant in the room. But there it was, plain as day, despite N-YHS's best efforts to distract the audience with a presentation that focused almost exclusively on proposed alterations to the facade of the Landmark. But the diversionary tactic simply did not work.

Because the building is a "Triple Crown" Landmark (that is, it is protected as an Individual NYC Landmark and as part of two historic districts), any and all changes must be reviewed by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The extensive facade work requires careful consideration. **But the question of the night was, where's the tower?** You know, the one that, according to the *New York Times*, the institution is planning for West 76th Street, where it would loom up behind and cantilever over the N-YHS Landmark? N-YHS's response: It's a separate project, and we don't want to talk about it. The audience, however, demanded transparency. How can we evaluate part of what you want to do when you hide the biggest part of what you intend to do?

Good journalist that he is, **Bill Moyers** watched and listened until the very end of the evening, when he approached the mic saying that the N-YHS presentation reminded him of the Texas card sharp who says, "Play the cards fair. I know what I dealt you." Moyers replied, "I wasn't born yesterday". He then posed the question: if the public supports the facade changes, will N-YHS abort the tower project? N-YHS's response: No. His message--that no rational discussion of renovation issues is possible while an unacceptable tower looms--was met with a standing ovation from the crowd.

The public debate continues next week at Community Board 7's meeting on Thursday, February 8, starting at 7:00 PM at the Fourth Universalist Society (Central Park West & 76th Street). Last night's vocal crowd made sure N-YHS got the message loud and clear. **KEEP UP THE FIGHT TO SAVE OUR SKYLINE!** Please make all efforts to attend. In the meantime, make sure you've added your name to "Save Our Skyline (SOS)" by emailing us at landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org. SOS is a coalition of individuals and organizations speaking with a unified voice against the exploitation of New York's Landmarks as "development opportunities." For more information, go to www.landmarkwest.org.

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