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NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY APPLICATION

Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried
Testimony before Manhattan Community Board 7
Tuesday, March 6, 2007
New York City

My name is Richard N. Gottfried. I represent the 75th Assembly District in Manhattan, which includes part of Community District 7. I regret that because of the legislative session in Albany, I am unable to attend this meeting in person.

Although the New York Historical Society is located just outside my district, its future and the plans relating to it do affect my district. Several months ago, I signed on to Landmark West's *Save our Skyline* campaign, opposing a proposed mixed-use museum/residential tower atop the Society's building. Not-for-profit organizations are increasingly trying to make use of their air rights and build residential or commercial towers that undermine landmark, historic district, and zoning regulations. I believe that the Landmarks Preservation Commission has been too receptive to these plans.

The application before Community Board 7 only deals with the proposed modifications to the Historical Society's façade. While I would certainly expect to oppose an application for a tower in the future, the façade changes should be judged on their own merit, considering architectural and preservation issues, and the needs of the Historical Society and the public.

Concerns have been raised that some people might oppose the façade changes because of their opposition to what the Historical Society might propose in the future, or because of an insistence that the Society not be allowed to make any change in the façade until all its future plans are formed. I would strongly disagree with opposition based on that. The Board may find valid reasons to deny this application, but the Historical Society's future plans should not be a factor.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening.