



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Community Board 7 Parks & Preservation Committee
Regarding the New-York Historical Society
February 8, 2007**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

The New-York Historical Society is a "Triple Crown" landmark: not only is designated as an Individual Landmark, it is an important anchor of both the Central Park West – West 76th Street Historic District *and* the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, a district that is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Beyond that, it is immediately adjacent to the Individual Landmark American Museum of Natural History and the Scenic Landmark Central Park.

This is sacred ground.

Last week, more than 400 people came out on one of the coldest nights of the year, eager for information about a major project that will affect all of our lives—not just the immediate neighbors, but all of us who care about this remarkable resource, this low-rise counterpoint in the iconic Central Park West skyline, the domino effect that any project of this kind has on other sites throughout the city. What those 400-plus people got was a rosy public-relations vehicle touting the Historical Society's many admirable programs, a quick overview of proposed façade alterations, and a flat refusal to disclose any information about the 280-foot tower they plan to build looming over their Landmark.

The crowd was outraged—and rightly so. Not that we don't care about the façade changes. We think they are cause for great concern. But it is an insult and a waste of time to get bogged down in this part of the project when the real deal is kept in a lockbox.

The Historical Society insists that the façade renovation and the tower are two separate projects. Then why are they phased mere months, if not weeks, apart? Do you really expect this Committee, your neighbors, civic organizations, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, all of us to ignore the obvious: that the Phase I façade changes are just a warm-up to the Phase II tower, a clear attempt to gain traction with an approval?

If there's a universal language in New York, it's real estate. And to quote Bill Moyers' comments from last week, we weren't born yesterday. Hundreds of people have joined "Save Our Skyline", a coalition of individuals and organizations who understand where this is headed. The majority of people in this room see this application for exactly what it is: a Trojan Horse. Please don't open the gate.

We urge the Committee to take a strong stand against this piecemeal approach to our Triple Crown Landmark. Two, integrally related proposals are on the table. The impact of these two proposals on the Landmark, the Historic Districts and the neighborhood as a whole must be presented and evaluated at the same time in a single, unified process.