



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
East 102nd Street Entrance
Central Park
May 20, 2008**

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

The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the application to alter a vehicular entrance, pedestrian pathways and surrounding landscaping in the Central Park - Scenic Landmark, an English Romantic style public park designed in 1856 by Olmsted and Vaux.

We would like to thank the Central Park Conservancy for making two presentations to our Certificate of Appropriateness Committee and taking to heart our committee's constructive criticism of the first proposal. Any alterations to the East 102nd Street carriage entrance—known as the Girl's Gate and one of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's original entrances to Central Park—should be carefully considered. With the exception of one detail, we support this proposal, which maintains the entrance's appearance as a carriage drive.

Olmsted and Vaux's innovative plan for Central Park masterfully accommodated the anticipated need for multiple modes of transportation—foot, horse and carriage. This plan has proven adaptable to modern vehicles, such as bicycles and automobiles, while still accommodating horses and pedestrians. Of the original 18 entrances to Central Park, several others have been closed to vehicular traffic, with varying degrees of practical and aesthetic success. We are pleased to report that, in our book, this project will fall in the "success" category as it maintains the visual distinction between "city" and "country" as intended by Olmsted and Vaux.

In our initial comments to the Conservancy, we expressed concerns that the introduction of a wide band of pavement across the entrance drive at Fifth Avenue would have created a boundary line at what should read, visually, as an inviting transitional space. The message of a park's entrance drive should be "Welcome, Friend", but that of the proposed pavement boundary was an emphatic "No Trespassing."

The Conservancy responded by removing this sidewalk extension and, instead, obstructing vehicular traffic with simple bollards, a design that serves the intended function while respecting historic interests.



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

The Decorative Granite Apron

As an addendum to our support for this project, we consider the decorative apron of granite block at the Fifth Avenue entrance a weak spot in the design and ask the applicant to consider using asphalt, a material that will allow the park entrance to read as a drive. In other locations where this granite block treatment has been used (for instance in SoHo crosswalks), the granite has become broken, uneven and generally detracts from the streetscape.

With this small element being addressed, we will be happy to support this sensitive alteration to the original Olmsted and Vaux footprint.