

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
116 West 71st Street
July 22, 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 construct a rear yard addition and a rooftop stair bulkhead, and to excavate the rear yard at 116 West 71st Street, a Renaissance Revival-style rowhouse designed by Thom & Wilson and built in 1883-84.

Rear Yard Addition

Section 2-16 of the Commission's Rules establishes when a proposal for a rear yard addition exceeds the purview of the staff, necessitating full-Commission approval. When an application surpasses so many of the standards it establishes, the Commission should be alerted to a proposal that reaches above and beyond what is appropriate for a rowhouse in a designated historic district. Of the eight criteria in this Section, four are not being met by this application.

The applicant proposes to remove the existing rear façade elevation's crowning corbeled brickwork. This is in direct opposition to two of Section 2-16's criteria. First, "g," which allows for Certificate of No Effect issuance "in buildings with rear cornices, corbeled brickwork on the parapet, or other distinctive roof silhouettes [where] the rear addition does not rise to the full height of the building." Secondly, criterion "b," in which no significant architectural features [of the rear façade] ... would be lost or damaged as a result of the construction of the addition" is surpassed. Special brick bonding at the rear cornice, also seen on neighboring rear facades, would be permanently discarded.

Equally, the full-width and full-height nature of the proposal would result in a loss of a tremendous amount of original fabric – criterion "h" would be fully disregarded. As proposed, the new design would drastically alter the appearance of this simple rowhouse and completely break the continuity of the rest of this row.

Finally, this application would also transgress criterion "e." The proposal, if realized, would entirely erase the fenestration of the rowhouse and replace it with an aesthetic not at all in keeping with its type. In short, and in contradiction to criterion "e," the rear of the building will retain *neither* the scale *nor* the character of an individual rowhouse. We recommend a wholesale rethinking of the design for this rear façade.

Rear Yard Encroachment

Not only will the simple punched-masonry fenestration that characterizes this rear façade and those of its neighbors be eliminated with the approval of this application, so will additional rear yard space with the intrusion of a rear yard addition. The Committee wishes to reiterate its point, made at other hearings in the past and to be made again here today, that midblock rear yards are an historical element worthy of preservation. Encroachments by additions which reduce the area of open space in the rear yard, such as this one does, are fundamentally inappropriate. We urge the Commission to take this into serious consideration.

Rooftop Projections

Regarding the proposed rooftop components, we understand that a dated, unrelated rooftop mock-up is being used to judge appropriateness and visibility for HVAC equipment as well as chimney extensions. We find this to be inappropriate and thus are unable to support this proposal.



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
117 West 81st Street
July 22, 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 the rear façade and to construct a rooftop addition at 117 West 81st Street, a Renaissance Revival-style rowhouse designed by Henry L. Harris and built in 1884-85.

First, we must say that we are pleased to see the applicant's plan to restore the façade of this historic rowhouse residence. A stoop restoration is a powerful gesture and often sets off a "domino reaction" – once one property owner does the right thing and restores a stoop, neighbors follow suit. On a midblock that is home to some 37 rowhouses, this rowhouse, as an anchor for the south side, sets a tone for the character of the street. With the reconstruction of its stoop, it will now also set a standard for sensitive rowhouse façade restoration in the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District.

Rear Yard Addition

In light of Landmark West's ongoing concerns about rear yard encroachment, we are troubled by the significant open space in the rear yard "doughnut" that would be consumed by this proposed addition. The proposed addition restores the yard's depth to the thirty-foot minimum required by zoning, but this necessitates only a two-foot withdrawal. Furthermore, this is coupled with the enlargement of the now-L-shaped extension to full-width.

Overall, 78 square feet of rear yard will be taken over – not an insignificant amount, considering the small size of this and other rowhouse rear yards. Such an addition would perpetuate the steady erosion of the historic footprint and openness of rowhouse midblock interiors. We urge the Commission to take this into serious consideration.

Color of Spandrels on Rear Façade

Our Committee has some suggestions for improving the currently proposed color palette and compositional hierarchy of the rear façade elevation. At present, the applicant proposes a rather somber color scheme of dark red to replicate the original brick and a black complementary brick for the spandrel panels. This harsh color contrast will be out of place with the neutral rear facades of the "doughnut." We recommend that the applicant consider a less jarring color option, such as white or a harmonizing glazed brick. Alternative materials could also provide for



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

lighter tone than the black brick – slate, stone or metal, all available in various shades, should be considered.

Our Committee is aware of the Commission staff's well-placed comments to return a sense of hierarchy to the rear façade. This might be achieved, along with greater structural definition, through adjustments to the design for the spandrel panels. As currently proposed, the inset spandrel panels in black would read visually as a mass void on the rear of the rowhouse. By bringing forward the top spandrel to the plane of the outer piers, combined with our suggestions regarding the addition's color palette, the applicant can harmonize the existing building with its proposed addition. Our Committee offers the attached sketch of how this alternate design might read on the rear façade.

Rooftop Addition

Regarding the rooftop addition, we understand that the design as proposed will be minimally visible to the public and agree that it will not adversely affect this historic rowhouse.



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
334 West 89th Street
July 22, 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 replace the areaway fence and install a trash enclosure at 334 West 89th Street, a Renaissance Revival-style rowhouse designed by Ralph S. Townsend and built in 1893-94.

The applicant proposes installing a nine-foot-long, two-foot-deep enclosure of solid, black metal to “hide” the building’s trash receptacles from the public. In actuality, the introduction of a three-dimensional, opaque mass along the sidewalk will be anything but hidden. Furthermore, it will obscure features of the rowhouse before which it would be placed. We recognize the atypical nature of this areaway’s existing conditions – namely, that the cellar level has been given window well exposure, creating a nine foot drop from the sidewalk level. Relocating the trash enclosure nine feet below grade may not seem ideal to the applicant, but it is the burden of the architect to overcome this.

Ideally, an enclosure mounted on a shelf to be cantilevered over the areaway would position trash receptacles off the street and reduce visibility. In addition, this would return the trash area to a level consistent with other rowhouses on the street and within the Historic District. The Commission should encourage innovative design solutions such as this, not condone design for convenience.

Our Committee also has suggestions regarding the materials of the proposed trash enclosure. The black paint on the proposed metal enclosure will most surely begin to chip off with wear over time. Our Committee urges the applicant to seek out alternatives to the ubiquitous black-painted metal trash bin. Selecting a more durable, quality material, such as tinted metal, should be explored.