



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
601 West End Avenue
October 7th, 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 establish a master plan governing the future installation of windows at 601 West End Avenue, a Renaissance Revival-style apartment building designed by Emery Roth and built in 1915-16.

Adopting a master plan for windows is no small enterprise. Each time LANDMARK WEST! testifies on applications to replace windows, install through-the-wall air conditioners, or otherwise alter a building's façade, we urge applicants to go the distance by adopting a master plan. While our Committee is pleased that the applicant at 601 West End Avenue has elected to do so, we find that the proposal before us today falls short of what an acceptable windows master plan should be.

The Commission's own Rules state that windows were "carefully designed as an integral component of the style, scale and character of the building. It is important to retain the configuration, operation, details, material, and finish of the original window ..." [LPC Rules 3-01(b)]. Nearly all of these facets of window design emphasized by the Commission are ignored in this proposal.

Window Configuration

The Commission's Rules instruct the applicant to seek out photographic evidence or historic drawings on which to base their design [LPC Rules 2-17(c)(1)]. Right now, the application proposes one-over-one aluminum windows for future replacements. Close inspection of the apartment building's c.1940 tax photo – the first of two visual reference points available for this building – informs that this configuration is inappropriate.

A visual assessment of the tax photo for 601 West End Avenue suggests sophisticated window configurations. Here, various multi-light window types are visible over single-light lower sashes. On the ground floor through the fourth floor, nine-over-one windows are flanked by narrow six-over-one windows. Throughout the middle of the building, twelve-over-one windows are obvious. Although a twelve-light upper sash can be seen at the twelfth and thirteenth floors, the nature of the lower sash is not clear. We've provided the Commission with a handout with close-up shots of the windows at these various points across the building's façade.

Over, please

A second source of guidance for this project is the book *Mansions in the Clouds: The skyscraper palazzi of Emery Roth* (Steven Ruttonbaum, 1986, pp. 58-59). Here is provided an original architect's rendering in which twelve-over-one windows are clearly discernible at all levels. This is reflective of window design trends of the early 20th century, in which it was common to combine multi-lights with the unobstructed visibility of a single pane. The pairing of these two types also added to the textural quality of the overall composition of the façades.

Even while recognizing that the rendering may not reflect 601 West End Avenue as built, both of these images make it clear that aligning future window replacements with the existing, non-original, one-over-one double hung windows is inappropriate. Restoring the original multi-light – including six-, nine- and twelve-light upper sashes – over single-light configuration should be the goal of this windows master plan.

Special Window

The one exception to these complex arrangements is the narrow South façade bathroom windows. Numbering nine in total, only one is original. A six-pane window, this singular remainder of the building's original fenestration should serve, first, as guidance for the entire column of bathroom windows. Second, this "special" window is evidence of the thickness of the original muntins. Their dimensions impact the visual characteristic of the window, as the Commission itself states in Rule 3-04(iii)(b), and should carry over to new multi-light upper sashes for the entire building.

Material and Finish

Referring back to Rule 3-01(b), the LPC recognizes that "it is important to retain the configuration, operation, details, material, and finish of the original window" when considering replacements. Appropriate window material and color are as important as window configuration. Presently, aluminum replacement windows are proposed. Wood is a more appropriate material than metal, and should be considered. The color of the window frames affect the visual impact of the building as well. Rather than default to black, a paint analysis should be done to determine the exact historical color. Examining the brick molds could reveal a color not otherwise expected.

Detail: Brick Molds

The applicant proposes that the historic brick molds be covered over with extruded metal panning. This is inappropriate. Rather than simulate this architectural feature in metal and obscure the original architectural detail underneath it, the historic brick molds should be revealed and restored.

In light of the points made here, issuing a permit for this master plan would undermine the LPC's Rules. Not only would the building's design continue to be marred by inappropriate windows, but this condition would be set in stone as the reference for all future window replacements. Rather than steer away from their own Rules, it is the Commission's obligation to act in the best interest of preserving the building. Approving this application would exemplify the case-by-case exceptions which are undermining the LPC's Rules. Send a clear message – deny this proposal. Then, through your staff, work with the applicant using the resources cited here to develop an appropriate windows master plan for 601 West End Avenue.