



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
182-188 Columbus Avenue
February 5, 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 reconstruct the façade of this neo-Grec-style tenement building which was designed by Babcock & McAvoy, built between 1885-1886 and designated as part of the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District.

After carefully considering this application, we are convinced that the extant façade is not repairable and acknowledge that improperly installed or quarried brownstone can lead to failure. As a result, we have decided we are not opposed to the proposal to replace this facade with cast stone. The new cast stone cladding will not be used on the building's first floor and therefore will be less conspicuous along the streetscape and among the upper floors of the block's other brick and brownstone tenement buildings.

Replacement versus restoration is an issue our committee struggles with constantly, and we want to explain our thinking. As advocates for Upper West Side's historic structures, LANDMARK WEST! vigorously supports restoration or, if necessary, in-kind replacement of stone. When original stone is replaced with cast stone, stucco or even painted, subtle differences of color and effect within each unit and from unit to unit are often glossed over and blended to a homogenous flat color. The material itself is an integral part of the construction history and character of the Upper West Side, a part that is all too swiftly becoming extinct. Replacement materials such as cast stone rob people of the experience of seeing a "brownstone" façade that is actually brownstone.

Built in 1885-1886, 182-188 Columbus Avenue is typical of the scale and details of tenements and flats buildings that were constructed along the avenue after the elevated train was built in 1879. This assemblage of late-19th-century mid-rise buildings gives Columbus Avenue its intimate feel and offers a foil to the high-rise Beaux Arts and Art Deco glamor of Central Park West. What distinguishes 182-188 Columbus from its neighbors is its original Portland brownstone façade. While many residential brownstones line the Upper West Side's mid-blocks, few unpainted examples remain along Columbus Avenue in the Upper West Side-Central Park West district.

We emphasize that, if the Commission approves this application, the following details must be considered: the composition of the replacement material, design and installation and window panning.

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Composition

To resemble the sparkle, texture and finish of the original sandstone more closely, we would like to see a better mix of mica in the cast stone.

Facade Design and Installation

It is clear that the success of the installation of this new cladding material, cast stone, is dependent on precise design and level of craftsmanship it receives. If the Commission does approve this application, we urge the staff to carefully review the shop drawings to ascertain good matching profiles, details, and proportions matching the original cladding material as close as possible.

In addition, we strongly urge the Commission to do on-site inspections of the substrate once probes are completed and make sure its structural integrity is sound so as to support this new cladding material. We suggest that the Commission Staff monitor the progress along the way and make sure this new re-cladding project is successful. As part of this project, we also recommend the applicant remove the sidewalk canopy at Peter's Restaurant, a distracting element that detracts from the building and would never be approved under landmarks guidelines.

Window Panning

We would like to bring to your attention the issue of the metal panning at windows currently on this building's facade. Since all the brownstone will be removed from the facade, with it will also be this panning. This is a great opportunity to remove something which is unsightly and greatly detracts from the significant features of this building. Beside, this Commission does not approve of this thick, heavy, and flat metal panning at windows on street facades.

What will go in its place? We urge this Commission to work with the applicant to reveal and restore the original wood brickmold, and paint it to match the restored cornice. If non-existing, new wood brickmold should be submitted by the applicant to be installed on these windows matching the historic profile and details.

Conclusion

In closing, we urge diligence on the part of the Commission and the applicant to ensure successful execution of this proposal. New York, and the Upper West Side in particular, are known for and cherish their beloved 19th century brownstone structures.