

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
309 West 80th Street
April 8, 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 rooftop and rear yard additions on this neo-Gothic/Renaissance style rowhouse building designed by Charles H. Israels and built in 1894.

Rear Yard Addition

As part of the pitch to win approval for this proposal, the applicant has stated that the demolition of the existing extension and redesign of the rear façade will result in a net gain in rear yard open space.

The rear yard open space may be increasing in square footage, but it is also decreasing in “cubage”, that is to say *the volume of open space*. It is for this reason that we object to the proposed rear yard addition. The rear yard open space is a critical element of the upper Manhattan’s development pattern, which is typically a system of solid bulk (forming the street wall) that rings a green respite, the void. As we have stated many times, it is the Commission’s responsibility to protect the integrity of the block interior—the void—from inappropriate development. Hemmed between West End Avenue and a bend in Riverside Drive, this block has a 326 foot street wall on West 80th Street and is one of the Upper West Side’s shortest blocks. So, by design, more of the rear yard open space is cast in shadow when compared to other blocks, a situation that should be considered when adding on to neighboring structures.

As part of this proposal, the Commission must also consider the severe impact on the neighboring rowhouse, 307 West 80th Street. The applicant’s gain will be this neighbor’s loss as its rear yard will be reduced to a sun-starved alley, wedged between a large apartment building and the proposed addition.

Rooftop Addition

Because this proposal is part of the overall scheme to bulk up this century-old structure and overshadow the block’s small rear yard, we also object to the rooftop addition.

To conclude, we also recommend the applicant consider restoring the parapet cornice that graced this structure’s front facade in the 1930s tax photo.

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
New Stable Building and Fencing
Central Park Zoo
April 8, 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 new stable building and install fencing adjacent to the zoo parking lot in the Central Park Zoo - Central Park - Scenic Landmark, a menagerie remodeled as a zoo, by Robert Moses in 1936, within an English Romantic style public park designed by Olmsted and Vaux in 1856.

As we consider the prospect of a new building in Central Park—not an issue to be taken lightly, especially in a highly-developed and heavily-trafficked section of the park—we cannot help but think about how we all could have predicted this dilemma. One could have foreseen this predicament back in January 2006 when the Commission considered the binding report “to enclose the central courtyard” of the 1871 Jacob Wrey Mould and Calvert Vaux-designed stable, shed and reservoir keeper’s cottage on Central Park’s 86th Street transverse road. Indeed, at the Commission’s public hearing LANDMARK WEST! voiced objections to:

- The massive glass and steel canopy proposed to enclose the courtyard and its overwhelming visual impact on this picturesque assemblage of 19th-century structures
- The New York Police Department’s self-admitted inadequate budget for such a high maintenance glass structure
- The canopy’s visibility from the nearby Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir
- The replacement of historic, multi-light wood windows with heavy single-pane bulletproof glass with metal casing

It is a tragedy this disastrous proposal was allowed to move forward.

Having considered the current application for a new stable building adjacent to the zoo parking lot, we are not opposed to the location, volume or *very idea* of constructing a stable, but we do strongly object to the proposed design. We cannot comment on the proposal to install fencing adjacent to the zoo parking lot since it was not part of the information we received from the Conservancy on April 1.

The proposed building would be situated in the zoo’s service complex designed by Aymar Embry II in 1934, yet the applicant has taken design cues from the court’s homeliest structure: the circa-1970s service garage. We completely disagree with this approach. There’s no better

word to describe the garage than “ugly”, and one committee member compared the proposed stable—with its common brick and long, unrelieved lintels—to a suburban carwash station.

In fact, the extra-wide bays separated by slender steel posts raised speculation that this structure may someday be converted to yet another garage. Regardless, Central Park deserves a more artfully designed building.

What our committee proposes is fairly simple: replace the brick cladding with board-and-batten siding, narrow the bays and allow the building to read as a stable, a farm structure. Certainly wood is a more attractive alternative for this modest building which will be highly visible from Fifth Avenue, the East Drive and the zoo approach. Central Park users deserve better, and so do the Police Enforcement Patrol horses, which were so recently evicted from their home at Claremont Stables. Undoubtedly, these beloved animals will lure admiring passersby from the zoo approach, so why not design a more attractive building for what could well become another Central Park attraction?

And while the Conservancy is sprucing up the service court, we suggest a little T.L.C. for the unsightly zoo garage. A few plants and flowering vines on lattice would do wonders to blend this pitiful eyesore into its extraordinary surroundings.