



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
155 West 76th Street
Tuesday, May 22, 2007**

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 areaway of the Renaissance Revival style rowhouse designed by Clarence True and built in 1890-91.

The proposal to alter the areaway at 155 West 76th Street brings to mind Christopher Gray's assessment of New York's varied architectural aesthetic:

"New York's streetscapes are like beaches, washed by their own special tides—the fads and fashions of building design—all of which contribute to the flow of the blocks, which are ever-changing, almost living things."

West 76th Street between Columbus and Amsterdam embodies this tidal flow; with brownstone, brick, and a variety of painted hues forming a colorful palette along the street.

Number 155 West 76th Street is at home in this evolving milieu, with white paint slathered on its brownstone and brick facade, and a basement level entry where a stoop once stood, the building is testament to the changing dictates of New York City function and fashion.

The proposal to redo the building's areaway, and construct a limestone kneewall where an iron rail now stands is yet an example of these changing dictates. While LW! applauds the owner for seeking much-needed improvements to the areaway, we have several concerns that we feel require serious consideration:

1. In order to harmonize with the neighborhood, the kneewall should be low and in keeping with the height of other similar walls along the street and throughout the historic district. Rather than being a tall barrier, then, the kneewall should sit low and provide union between the building and the street. The proposed wall seems to be composed of 1'6" stone and 1'6" railing. We suggest that the railing comprise the bulk of the wall, at least 2 feet, in order to remain open to the street.
2. Ultimately, the building should be restored to what it is, a brownstone—that is BROWN— rowhouse. In this proposal, we are concerned that the limestone indicated for the wall conflicts with the original color scheme of the building. We would ask the owners, the architect, and the Commission to give serious thought to the appropriateness of the light color palette. If the limestone is approved, we suggest a stipulation that any façade improvements in the future that restore the brownstone must be accompanied by a replacement of the limestone kneewall with brownstone.

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Although, as Christopher Gray says, New York's historic streets exist in a tidal flow of evolving aesthetics, we urge the Commission to consider which aesthetics best represent the building's historic intent, and the language of the neighborhood as a whole.



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**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
31 West 82nd Street
May 22, 2007**

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 window opening on this Romanesque Revival style rowhouse which was designed by Edward Chester Smith, built in 1886-87 and designated as part of the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District.

We are not opposed to this alteration as it does not appear to be visible from the street.



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Certificate of Appropriateness Committee

Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission

**The Belnord Apartments-201-225 West 86th Street, aka 200-248 West 87th Street, 540-558 Amsterdam Avenue,
2360-2376 Broadway
May 22, 2007**

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 amend Certificate of Appropriateness 96-0084 for a Master Plan governing the installation of storefronts for this individually landmarked Italian Renaissance-style apartment building designed by Hiss and Weekes and built in 1908-1909.

As Christopher Gray described in a 1987 column, “the completion of the subway in 1904 made Broadway north of Columbus Circle a Champs-Elysees” with major buildings like the Ansonia, Apthorp and Belnord giving “cosmopolitan electricity” to the Boulevard. Best known for its magnificent interior courtyard and solid Italian Renaissance façade, the Belnord is also notable as one of the first major apartment buildings on upper Broadway to incorporate ground-floor stores into its design. In recognition of the Belnord’s significance to the city, it was designated an Individual Landmark in 1966, just a year into the Commission’s tenure.

74-711

Through the 74-711 process in the 1990s, the Commission made tremendous concessions to the building owner by allowing additional commercial space for P.C. Richards. With respect to this and future applications, it is not unreasonable to set a high standard for preservation. It is our understanding that the applicant is proceeding to evaluate work that was and was not completed under the 74-711 agreement between the building owner, the City Planning Commission and the Landmarks Commission. Our committee requests a copy of the 74-711 evaluation to ensure that it is in keeping with the original agreement.

Correcting Storefront Violations

As the commercial space is a fundamental aspect of the Belnord’s design—and today sadly compromised by alterations made without the Landmarks Commission’s approval and in noncompliance with the adopted storefront master plan—we are glad that the applicant is moving forward with correcting the building’s numerous violations. Also, for the sake of full disclosure, Page Ayres Cowley, the architect, is a long-time friend of LW! and has served on our C of A Committee.



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That said, we are troubled by the applicant's assertion that at least one of the building's storefronts—including CVS on Amsterdam Avenue—was designed and constructed without Commission approval. This is evident in the problematic design of the storefront, most notably windows that are recessed too far into the building. If an applicant was able to secure building permits without approval from the Landmarks Commission, this represents a major failure in interagency communication with the Department of Buildings as well oversight of this major landmarked building by the building management. We trust that the Commission is making all efforts to correct this communication problem.

Amended Storefront Masterplan

As supportive as we are, in principle, of greater consistency in the Belnord's commercial spaces, we have the following recommendations for the approach as presented.

Having evaluated this proposal, we also urge the Commission reinforce its commitment to appropriate authenticity. A photograph of the Belnord from around 1910, submitted by the applicant, shows that the building's original storefronts had four divided lights, spanning the entire storefront in the transom. This configuration should be used as the basis for what the Commission ultimately approves. Further, it is also important to acknowledge the complexity of this application, requiring close scrutiny by the Landmarks Commission of each storefront and each window.

The architect has identified what appear to be two original windows and a delivery entrance on the 87th Street façade of the building, what is now Club Monaco. As part of the approved masterplan, these windows should be called out as special windows that are original to the building and not be replaced.

Only after these details have been addressed can we fully support this application.



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School
36 West 93rd Street
May 22, 2007**

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 rooftop addition on this building designed by Michael Wurmfield and constructed in 1995 in the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District.

Landmark West's Certificate of Appropriateness committee would like to thank the designer for presenting Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School's proposal to enlarge the existing school building—including building out of setbacks and addition of two floors—to our committee in March 2007. We are pleased that the applicant has addressed some our concerns with respect to the material of the addition as well as the design and prominence of the clock.

As we stated after the initial presentation, we are not opposed, in principle, to the expansion of the structure as its simple modern design can accommodate some additional bulk. That said, we believe that the applicant needs to revisit certain aspects of this proposal.

Design and Bulk of the Addition:

The committee is concerned that the design seeks to accomplish two different things at once: recede through its material and call attention to itself through its large windows. As we stated in our earlier comments, the adaptation of the "mansard" concept is awkward for the following reasons:

- 1) there is a lack of transition from brick to metal on the rooftop addition
- 2) the mansard steps up awkwardly from 2 stories in the front to 1 story along the sides

With respect to the 93rd Street and west elevation, the curve of the "mansard" roof is in the same plane as the existing building and lacks the spring line and shadow lines of traditional mansard roofs. The lack of transition from original to addition could be addressed through the use of a ribbon window. Another possibility would be to incorporate recessed setbacks for the added floors, instead of the curved roof as proposed.

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In keeping with this idea, the addition's bulk could be de-emphasized through increased shadow lines, perhaps through a brise soleil.

With respect to the low building on West 92nd Street, the existing structure is dwarfed by the scale of the addition. Recessing the added floors would allow the original building to be dominant as the rounded corner makes the addition appear to be bulbous.

In conclusion, we urge the applicant to revisit the design as proposed and create a greater transition from the original building to the rooftop addition.

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