



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
190-196 Columbus Avenue, aka 100 West 69th Street
May 8, 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 install a barrier-free access ramp at this neo-Grec style flathouse with Queen Anne style elements designed by Thom & Wilson and built in 1885-86 and designated as part of the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District.

LANDMARK WEST! supports making landmarks accessible to people of all abilities. Creating barrier-free access is a challenge that preservationists must face head-on, and it is a challenge that must be met through better design. While our Committee commends the applicant's intention to make its storefront entrance universally accessible, we are concerned that the current approach is not appropriate for this storefront and, even worse, would set a precedent for the proliferation of other, similarly inappropriate responses at the many retail locations with comparable accessibility issues. The solution is not to ignore the problem, but to respond with a sensitive design that can be replicated and used as a catalyst for business and building owners to address the need for barrier-free access.

The current proposal would create an unfortunate sidewalk obstruction by placing an approximately 3-foot by 3-foot 8-inch ramp and handrail in front of this storefront.

This proposal has wide reaching implications on the streetscape of Columbus Avenue and, indeed, landmarked commercial streets throughout the city. On this block of Columbus alone, 14 of 21 storefronts have above grade entrances, many that are higher than the 3" rise at L'Occitane. Imagine if, one day, each storefront were to have its own ramp. The heavily-trafficked 19-foot, 4-inch-wide sidewalk would in effect have a separate "zone" devoted to access ramps. This is not to mention the space already devoted to tree pits, a bus stop, and sidewalk cafes. All are important elements for the quality of life in our community and require thoughtful care in their implementation. The time is ripe for the Commission to set an example for other retailers to follow, striking the right balance between appropriate design and the mandate for accessibility.

190-196 Columbus Avenue, a corner storefront, presents other solutions for barrier-free access. Our Committee suggests as most appropriate a gently graded sidewalk leading to the store entrance (see illustration and photographs), sort of an inverted crosswalk curb cut. Our Committee prepared a sketch of L'Occitane's store entrance showing a ramped-

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sloped sidewalk that accomplishes the 3-inch grade change without a separately constructed ramp with handrails. This would comply with specifications established by the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (Section 4.8), “Where the running slope of an accessible route is more than 5%, it is considered a ramp. Generally, changes in level up to 6 inches can be treated as a curb ramp.”

We note that this solution has been used in similar locations, such as the 6-inch grade change at 2062 Broadway, between 70th and 71st Streets, and, as is pictured in the handout, the Sephora storefront at the individually landmarked Ansonia Hotel. Such a feature would allow access to the store but not disrupt its architectural features.

Another solution is to integrate an interior ramp by removing the door sill to accommodate a ramp and railing within the store. A third solution is evident at Lancome, which occupies another corner storefront across the street. Lancome has met its barrier-free access requirements by installing a ramp around the corner from its main Columbus Avenue entrance, at its West 69th Street entrance, a location with significantly less foot traffic.

As a society we have a mandate to ensure equal access to all and as a Commission your mandate is to ensure that safeguarding the City’s historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage is treated equally as public necessity. We look forward to seeing a more appropriate solution to this design problem.



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**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
304 West 91st Street
May 8, 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 Renaissance Revival-style rowhouse which is part of the Riverside-West End Historic District and was designed by Martin V.B. Ferdon and built in 1893.

Not only should this visible rooftop addition be evaluated based on its relationship to its host, 304 West 91st Street, but also with respect to its visual impact on the neighboring 1894 Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, the former Fourth Presbyterian Church designed by George Heins and Christopher Grant Lafarge.

As we have stated repeatedly in testimony before this Commission, our committee believes that a rooftop addition should declare itself as such with materials that express a rooftop vernacular, such as metal or glass. Rooftop additions never just "blend in." Better that they have a distinct architectural expression that reads as part of the roof landscape. This is all the more important in a situation where the addition will be visible in such a strong and significant design context as this one.

As you consider the impact of this addition on the historic district, we will close with this description of the block's composition from Christopher Gray's 1991 Streetscapes column:

"Somehow, both blockfronts on West End Avenue between 90th and 91st Streets have remained low in scale, with only rowhouses and the church. Its tower, with the four illuminated clock faces, thus sticks up in a giant empty space, a vast urban 'room' for which the tall apartment towers on the south side of 90th and the north side of 91st Street form the 'walls.' This accident gives the church a presence far beyond its actual architectural accomplishment, which is pleasant but not outstanding."



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**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Central Park Zoo
May 8, 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 building, two pavilions, fencing and pathways in this menagerie remodeled as a zoo, by Robert Moses in 1936, within an English Romantic style public park designed by Olmsted and Vaux and located within the Central Park Scenic Landmark.

Whenever new buildings are proposed for Central Park, where every tree, boulder and vista is cherished, it is not an issue to be taken lightly. The Central Park Zoo bears an impressive legacy of design, including the architectural imprint of Aymar Embury II and Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo & Associates (1988) and sculpture by Paul Manship and Frederick George Richard Roth.

This proposal to construct a snow leopard exhibit consists of three general elements: two viewing pavilions, a Himalayan-inspired outdoor habitat (shrouded in netting) and a holding bin. Based on the designs presented, we do not object to the pavilions, but have concerns about the two other aspects of the design.

Holding Bin

Based on the building plan, it appears that the structure will be visible from within and outside the zoo, yet it remains difficult to evaluate the extent of this visibility without a mock-up. To shield this building from view, an option to consider is excavation to sink the structure into the earth.

The proposed design for the holding bin, a concrete block structure to be clad in cedar siding, is totally alien to Central Park and the Zoo. The proposed design bears no relationship to the other zoo buildings. For the composition of this structure, we recommend referring to other design cues, such as the hexagonal form that is prevalent throughout the zoo.



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Habitat and Netting Framework

Also of concern is the netting framework that will shroud the snow leopard habitats. Based on the visibility study, the support poles will be visible from Park Drive and other parts of Central Park. The applicant has removed mock-ups for the netting's support poles, leaving the Commission and the public unable to evaluate independently the structure's visibility.

With respect to this proposal, we urge the Commission not to approve new structures in Central Park's carefully structured landscaped without the proper tools for evaluation.



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Hotel Belleclaire
250 West 77th Street
May 8, 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 create a new entrance at the West 77th Street façade of the Hotel Belleclaire, an Art Nouveau/Secessionist-style hotel designed by Emery Roth and built in 1901-1903, an individual landmark located at 250 West 77th Street (aka 2171-2179 Broadway).

Our Committee enthusiastically supports the removal of the existing, inappropriate entrance on West 77th Street and the re-creation of this glass enclosure as it originally appeared when this building was first constructed. To quote the Commission's 1987 designation report, the Hotel Belleclaire is "a fascinating stylistic anomaly" with elements of both the Art Nouveau and Secessionist movements. This application represents an important opportunity to recreate a defining architectural feature of one of the Upper West Side's loveliest landmarks.

As with any other project, the execution is in the details, particularly with regard to the intricate design of the roof-mounted railing, the bulkhead and the materials. Our Committee was not satisfied with the level of detail provided by the drawings submitted for our review, and while we wish to give this project our wholehearted endorsement, we look to the Commission to gain clarification on several critical points.

Rooftop Railing:

The proposed decorative iron railing does not appear to match the original design as shown in the 1914 photo of the hotel that is before you. This key piece of historical documentation should be used as a template for matching the original design as closely as possible. Alternatively, the new railing should resemble the metal railing on the roof of the Belleclaire. Furthermore, cast iron is certainly the most appropriate material for this element. The applicant's drawings do not specify the material to be used.

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Our Committee also recommends that no mechanical equipment be placed atop this new entrance as it would detract from any favorable design and other significant features of the building.

Bulkhead

The applicant proposes to clad the bulkhead in granite tile, which is neither appropriate nor historically accurate. Thicker granite cladding units should be used, matching the details and profiles of the existing granite base.

In conclusion, we also suggest the application take inspiration from the O'Neill Building in the Ladies' Mile Historic District, and consider restoring the ornate dome that once graced its northwest corner. As one of the true landmarks in the parade of Belle-Epoque buildings going up Broadway, the Hotel Belleclaire deserves five-star treatment. And the owners of buildings in the Ladies' Mile district have certainly learned that architecture can be the best form of advertising there is.

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