



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
119 West 87<sup>th</sup> Street  
October 31, 2006**

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 additions on this neo-Grec style rowhouse designed by Increase M. Grenell and constructed in 1884.

The 10-foot deep, 100-square-foot rear yard addition proposed in this application represents a significant encroachment into this block's rear yard, and we recommend denying this part of the proposal.

As we have in the past, the Committee urges the Commission to consider the "doughnut" of open space formed by the rear yards of Manhattan rowhouse blocks as an important element worthy of preservation. This issue is especially significant for this block where two rear yard additions are being considered in the same public hearing. If the Commission permitted all rear yard additions, visible and non-visible, as a rule, the entire block would become a concrete platform, totally eliminating the rear yards so important to the integrity of these rowhouses.

Our committee was not able to fully evaluate the visibility of the rooftop addition as the visibility studies were conducted when trees were in full foliage. A more complete study, to determine the addition's visibility during the cold weather months, should be conducted when the leaves have fallen.



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The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the application to construct rooftop and rear additions on this Modern-style apartment building designed by Judith Edelman and built in 1984-87.

**Additional level on Columbus Avenue building:**

Our committee does not object to the proposed one-story and penthouse addition to the nine-story structure that faces Columbus Avenue. This is not a building that has a strong composition with a bold termination, and the structure's height is not integral to its proportion or style. The original structure could have been designed with one less or one additional floor.

It is impossible to judge the cornice without more detailed presentation materials. Cornices were not part of the vocabulary of architecture at the time of the building's design, and it all depends on the design of the addition and the cornice. The building with a cornice may very well end up looking, as the French say, "like a cow with an apron."

**87<sup>th</sup> Street Façade and Rear Yard Addition:**

The proposed addition on the smaller 87<sup>th</sup> Street annex structure is more alarming. It is excessive in bulk and height for a side street. In addition, the massive, 10-story rear-yard addition brings a considerable amount of bulk to the rear yard and would overpower neighboring brownstones. The placement of this addition will cut off the view of the rear yard from West 88<sup>th</sup> Street, a small sliver of green on this densely built street.

**Materials:**

We do not recommend looking to the dark brown color of the metal bays as a design cue for future metal cladding on the additions. This dreary color was depressing the day it was built, and it is still depressing now. Perpetuating the use of this color will not enhance the building in any way.

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In conclusion, we are in favor of the additional story and penthouse on the main structure and require greater details about the building's termination. The proposed rooftop addition on the West 87<sup>th</sup> Street façade is excessively bulky and needs to be scaled back. The rear yard addition should not be allowed to block the view into the rear yard.