



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
15 West 81st Street
February 21, 2006**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

Our Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the application to modify a rooftop addition built in noncompliance with the Certificate of No Effect 98-1929.

LANDMARK WEST! is strongly opposed to this application. Constructed atop an apartment building designed by Emery Roth, the existing illegal penthouse is highly visible from West 82nd Street and interferes with the view of one of the neighboring Beresford's three landmark towers. The proposed "mansard" roof—meant to correct the violations—is no better as it detracts from the historic roofscape and diminishes what Christopher Gray describes as the "expansive majesty" of the Beresford's towers. The proposal would, in fact, be more visible from the street, due to the bulk of the mansard roof.

It is our understanding that this penthouse was initially approved in 1998 by the Landmarks Preservation Commission at the staff level without completing the necessary viewshed studies. We strongly believe that if this proposal were to come before you today, without its prior history, it would be denied. The proposal would in fact be more visible from the street, due the bulk of the mansard roof. The Commission should not feel compelled to approve this application because the current penthouse was approved erroneously.

In the past the Commission has acted decisively to protect the public from the grave consequences of illegal development. Developers have been required to remove entire stories from buildings constructed without proper review. The Commission must vigilantly uphold its own rules, or else property owners will have no incentive to follow them.

We urge the Commission to require the applicant to remove the addition.



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**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
120 West 72nd Street
February 21, 2006**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

Our Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the application to construct an apartment building at 120 West 72nd Street.

As this commission knows, this block of West 72nd Street between Columbus and Broadway is of particular interest and concern for our organization because of its unique development and prominence within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District. Addressing what Christopher Gray referred to in the mid-1990s as West 72nd Street's "honky tonk" quality, LW! started the Retail Assistance Program for this block in 1997. Since then we have worked with City Council to secure over \$1 million in capital funding for streetscape improvements, joined together with building owners and businesses to remove 18 illegal canopies on this block alone and collaborated with this Commission and the Department of Buildings to introduce more appropriate signage. As a validation of the community's efforts, West 72nd Street was recognized as a semifinalist in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Great American Main Street Award competition in 2004, the first street in New York City to ever be so honored. We all know that improvements on West 72nd Street are an ongoing process, and every change in the physical fabric makes a difference. And this proposal—to design and construct a new building from the ground up in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District—presents an opportunity for big change.

We understand that the one-story taxpayer at 120 West 72nd Street has been vulnerable to development for many years, and we do not object to the basic concept of demolishing this building to redevelop the site. Nevertheless, from the time we first learned of the project in late December, we have been concerned that this proposal is on a fast track as it has only been in the design phase for a couple of months. As we all know, a proposal of this magnitude is certainly not something that should be taken lightly. Since January, we have met and communicated often with the development team and appreciate their sense of collaboration in crafting the design. That said, we still have remaining concerns about the proposal.

LANDMARK WEST!

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Façade

We are not opposed to the modern expression of the façade, its materials, or the glass curtain wall if all of the elements are sensitively proportioned and detailed, particularly the windows. There is no reason that this building should not stand out as a great, 21st-century contribution to the fabric of the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District.

Still, our committee feels that the design needs some refinement, especially in terms of the detailing. Improvements in the details could pull together its overall design and reinforce the façade's residential scale, particularly in its glass curtain wall, to prevent it from resembling an office tower.

Materials

Brick: Our committee's primary concern with the masonry portion of the facade is the need to preserve the contrast with magnificent white terra cotta of the neighboring 118 West 72nd Street building. The designers have chosen a "compromise color" of not too light and not too dark. The proposed color may not provide an adequate contrast to the neighboring building.

Steel: The exposed steel appears to be suitable as a façade material in this context, but it needs better treatment in conjunction with the masonry to be used. It can be achieved with a retuning of details and proportions.

Windows

The proportions, configuration and operation of the punched windows in the masonry portion of the facade are inappropriate. While we do not want them to mimic their neighbors, there should be some dialogue with the scale and texture of other windows on the block. Currently the windows read as flat and bland and their large scale is out of context with other nearby apartment buildings.

Storefront

The street level is the most immediate experience that most people will have of the building, and one that will situate the building in the context of this retail block. LANDMARK WEST!, the property owners, merchants and community have invested considerable energy into making West 72nd Street a place to "stroll, stop and shop." It is of paramount importance that any addition to the streetscape advance this mission.



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Our committee was not presented with a thoroughly considered design for the street level, which we can only assume is still unresolved. Among our concerns are the color and durability of the proposed material for the limestone surround, the signage, the frame and infill material of the storefront and whether the storefront will have a bulkhead like other storefronts on West 72nd Street.

Penthouse

We recommend the penthouse be reduced in size to eliminate its visibility from the street. In addition, the elevator mechanicals and other equipment could be placed in the basement.

We look forward to continuing to work with the developers' team and the Commission to make the most of this opportunity to introduce a "top-notch" 21st-century design to West 72nd Street and the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District.



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**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
New York Historical Society
170 Central Park West
Tuesday, February 21, 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 install flagpoles and banners at the New York Historical Society, a Roman Eclectic style museum and library designed by York and Sawyer, built in 1903-08, and enlarged under the direction of Walker and Gillette in 1937-1939.

The way to be a good steward of this Individual Landmark is not by plastering it with signage that obscures its landmark façade. One need only refer to the museum's promotion of its 2004 Alexander Hamilton exhibit when the building's façade was covered entirely to resemble a \$10 bill.

Our committee objects to making the existing signage and banners a permanent fixture of this Individual Landmark. We encourage the historical society to craft a more cohesive and appropriate scheme for temporary signage. In their current form, the brackets are placed over and partially obscure small windows in the east facade. An appropriate design should take aim not to obscure architectural details. Other museums occupying landmark buildings have come up with plans to provide more tasteful examples of appropriate signage.

We urge you to deny this proposal.