



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
466-68 Columbus Avenue
March 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 construct a rooftop addition and alter the façade 466-68 Columbus Avenue, a two-story commercial building built in 1894 and altered by William and Donald Freed in 1961. This building is part of the Central Park West/Upper West Side Historic District.

Our committee is concerned at the rapid pace at which the applicant is trying to move what is essentially a new building in the district through the Landmarks approval process. The applicant has stated he is on a tight schedule to open the Kidville facility in May, but the primary concern before this Commission is that this building be designed and constructed as a positive addition to the district.

First, the applicant does not appear to be proceeding according to the proper Landmarks Preservation Commission process. A Department of Buildings permit issued in late November and currently posted on the building's scaffolding stated the intention to "demolish [a] portion of the storefront." Whether or not the façade is considered "no style," an applicant should never proceed with demolition of a storefront before receiving a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission.

That said, our committee does not have enough information to evaluate this new building. The designation report, which describes the structure as having been constructed in 1894, does not clarify if any original façade details remain from when the façade was altered in 1961. If original elements remain, efforts should be made to recover and incorporate them into the new design.

If indeed nothing from the 1894 façade remains, this building must be evaluated as a new building in the district. If that is the case, there are several problems with the execution of this design. The lack of depth and articulation in the brick veneer and windows appear flat and "blind" and are not appropriate for this district.

Further, there are other important elements that are unclear in this proposal. Below is a list of significant elements that are either insufficiently detailed or inappropriate for a new building in the district.

LANDMARK WEST!

THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

Signage

The combination of a sign and awning is not appropriate for the district. The applicant should be allowed one or the other but not both. Further, at two feet and five inches the sign letters exceed the acceptable size for signage in this district.

Windows

Again, very little detail is available. The windows in the plan are single pane with an applied mullion, which is not appropriate for upper stories in the district. Operable, multi-pane windows would improve the appearance of the building, and child safety rails would address the applicant's safety concerns. The windows lack depth as they are not set back very far in the façade, and consequently, will have minimal shadow lines. This contributes to the flat appearance of the facade.

Storefront

In addition to not providing specific details on elements like the bulkheads, the application proposes anodized aluminum for the storefront. This material's modern aesthetic is at odds with the traditional brick façade. Painted metal would be more appropriate.

Facade

We did not see a sample of the brick and are unable to comment on its visual impact on the neighboring buildings in the district. The elevation shows a common bond pattern, which makes the façade a veneer-like quality and adds to the flat appearance of the building. The design should include a more interesting bonding pattern, or perhaps terracotta detail, and also variegated massing to reduce the flatness of the structure.

Finally, the application includes no detail for the cornice, which is also necessary for evaluating the structure.

In conclusion, we urge the Commission to take a step back and consider all the important details to make this a successful building.