

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
150 Riverside Drive  
Tuesday, November 22, 2005**

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 exterior security cameras.

The Committee approves of the size of the cameras but would recommend that they be located in place minimally visible to the public and painted a flat color to match the surrounding building material.

We would also recommend that the camera installations be reversible and not cause any damage to the masonry. We recommend that the cameras be attached to the mortar joints with rust-resistant brackets.

The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee could support this application with these modifications, but due to the lack of information provided in the specifications, we do not recommend approval at this time.

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
346 W. 89<sup>th</sup> Street  
Tuesday, November 22, 2005**

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 front yard and install a fence at 346 W. 89<sup>th</sup> Street. The Isaac and Julia Rice mansion, designed by Herts and Tallent and built between 1901-03, is one of two remaining freestanding mansions on Riverside Drive. It is considered one of the street's most important buildings, and its landscaping, particularly its front yard, is a crucial element of its design and importance.

We would like to thank the architect for the project, Neil Parker, for presenting the proposal to our committee. As you know well, this proposal is the most recent of several put forth by Yeshiva Ketana to accommodate its needs as a school. A 1994 proposal requested approval to install a basketball court and playground in front of the mansion, and a 1998 proposal was for a synthetic rubberized surface to cover the front yard. Both were rejected by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. In the latter instance, the school's administrators claimed that they could not successfully maintain grass due to their northwest facing exposure, numerous shade trees and foot traffic from schoolchildren. As a result, the school has not maintained the yard and has allowed it to become an unkempt dust bowl. Not only is this unsightly, but the blowing dust is a problem to neighboring residents.

Our committee applauds the yeshiva in its proposal to repair the yard's entry gate, steps, balustrade and retaining wall and its attempt to address yard maintenance and remove the nuisance. However, we consider its current proposal to install a fence and artificial turf only a marginal improvement over the 1998 proposal for the synthetic rubber. The proposed turf has little precedent in New York's designated landmarks and so far has been used only at King's Manor in Jamaica and Riverside Park for a designated sports field, where it already shows signs of wear although it was installed very recently. Due to the turf's unnatural green color and shiny appearance, we would not want to see this material become standard for landmark settings that appropriately should be planted with natural grass. If used at the Rice Mansion, could it also be used in Jackson Heights Historic District, where grass is so integral to the planning and design? Could someone in Riverdale or Douglaston Hills decide to install this turf in lieu of grass if they got tired of mowing?

As caretaker for this landmark property, yeshiva must balance maintenance with programmatic needs. The lawn should only be used for youngest children (who cannot go across the street to the park), not for rough play, and only at limited times. The school is fortunate to be located steps away from Riverside Park and has recently constructed a gymnasium in its basement. These available amenities should reduce the demand on the front yard, which could be restored

as a garden for lower impact educational purposes. Yeshiva needs to come up with a comprehensive maintenance program.

In conclusion, we request that you deny this proposal.