



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Frederick and Lydia Prentiss Residence
September 13, 2016**

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 an entrance canopy and awnings at the Frederick and Lydia Prentiss Residence, a Beaux-Arts style rowhouse designed by C. P. H. Gilbert and built in 1899-01. It is an individual landmark and part of the West End - Collegiate Historic District Extension.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee has reviewed the plans and acknowledges that canopies can be appropriate on larger scale multi-family dwellings and commercial buildings. However, the committee finds the installation of these canopies on an historic row house, especially one designated as an individual landmark, to be inappropriate. The canopy and awnings, seemingly placed in arbitrary locations on the façade, detract from the building's impressive design features that lend it "a striking presence at the gateway to Riverside Drive."

The Committee questions the necessity of a canopy and awnings on the Prentiss House. The entrance is already protected by the portico, the facade faces west, and the house is already in the shadow of taller buildings, so that only some late mid-afternoon sun reaches this door.

Regarding the canopy's design, the proposed sloped roof inserted underneath the portico would not only look awkward, but conceal its ceiling. The canopy is inappropriately placed above the volutes of the composite Ionic capitals and would cover the decorative iron work found on the transom panel over the door. Additionally, the anchor detail would be attached through the carved limestone door surround, damaging the historic fabric described as significant in the designation report. All of these considerations indicate that there should be no canopy under the portico.

The awnings are equally deleterious. Those to be located above the French doors on the Portico Deck, as well as those on the south elevation, are boxy and obscure the large transom, while the awning above the side door of the south elevation will cover a window with Hudson River views and fill in the gap between this property and 311 West 72nd Street.

If the applicant still feels compelled to install a canopy and awnings, the Committee recommends using a retractable one that avoids bridging onto the sidewalk. A minimal installation with a flat roof and shallow sides would be more appropriate than inserting a

canopy with a pitched roof under the portico. If window awnings are necessary, they should be shallow and open at the sides like those found along Madison Avenue. Finally, a delicate, metal-framed canopy that fits over the landing is much better suited to the side door than a large awning that will likely become a pigeon roost.

The Landmark West! C of A Committee does not believe that the proposed awnings “will add to the elegance of the building façades,” but will actually detract from the significant architectural features, such as the main entry portico and molded surrounds, described in the Prentiss Residence’s designation report. The committee therefore asks the LPC to reject the applicant’s proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.