



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
378 West End Avenue, and 260 West 78th Street
December 8, 2015**

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 applications to:

- Construct a rooftop addition, replace windows, create and fill in window openings, install a green wall, install a canopy, replace doors, and create sidewalk gardens at 378 West End Avenue, a Renaissance Revival style apartment building designed by Schwartz & Gross and built in 1914-15, within the West End Collegiate Historic District Extension.
- Demolish an institutional building designed by Ballard Todd Associates, built 1965-67 and expanded in 1990 by Helpern Architects, within the West End Collegiate Historic District Extension.

The Applicant and their design team have produced a provocative proposal, which not only restores a former West End Avenue apartment hotel to its former glory, but will reduce density and, perhaps most importantly, respond to a greater context beyond its given site— to once again spotlight the individually landmarked 1892-3 Robert W. Gibson West End Collegiate Church and original school buildings. This proposal acknowledges its current environment and provides an urbanistic solution that reconciles preservation priorities with programmatic goals and non-profit requirements.

Platen Hall is an altered building that was purpose-built for educational use. With the school relocating, the building's intent is mooted, and a return to residential purposes on this site seems appropriate. Although our Committee does not take demolition within our historic districts lightly, there is a consensus that, given the change of use in this instance, the subject building's architectural merit and the greater master plan scenario for benefiting vistas beyond the site itself, demolition might be justified. With a proposed result to complement the district and benefit its namesake landmark, the Committee finds that demolition is acceptable in this circumstance.

Likewise, returning 378 West End Avenue to its original residential purpose is a natural, and an appropriate *RE-reuse*. In doing so, the Applicant will restore wood frame windows and missing architectural features, such as balconettes. The Committee questions the future maintenance and viability of the Turtle Garden and its adjacent

fencing, but there is agreement that the overall concept and new proposed south-facing masonry openings are appropriate.

The new construction proposed to wrap 378 West End Avenue is in itself a thesis on Upper West Side development patterns. Its idiosyncrasies would require more than three minutes to address, but the Committee finds its custom iron and brickwork to be both reminiscent of fading arts, but also a modern stance on these media, befitting of the Upper West Side. The proposed massing and rational application of quality finishes suit the block and district. They are emblematic of civically-minded development, the evidence of which is carefully held and cherished in our splendid historic districts, along with many buildings along Broadway. The overall detailing is a refreshing instance where the end result leaves everyone not only satisfied, but happy.

LANDMARK WEST! supports this application.