



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  
July 19, 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 demolish the existing building and construct a new building at 466-68 Columbus Avenue. The current building is a commercial building originally built in 1894, altered by William and Donald Freed in 1961, and altered and enlarged by Gruzen Samton LLP. This building is within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District.

Our Committee is sensitive to 466 Columbus Avenue's evolution—from the two-story Williams Department Store, to an Associated Supermarket, to a hardware emporium, and on to Kid Zone, when it was appropriately enlarged to three stories. Throughout that lineage, this landmark has always been a mid-block background building. Our Committee considers any proposed demolition very carefully. In this case, we believe the existing building should set the model for any future development on this site. We disagree with the position that other outlier, mid-block, side-street buildings should serve as justification for the introduction of new forms and experimental products yielding a potential nine-story (plus cellar) mixed-use building that will stand head and shoulders above its neighbors, and on a mid-block avenue site.

Out-of-context massing aside, our Committee found the tri-partite base/body/crown to be disjointed, appearing as three separate sets of ideas. The street-level commercial space is a recessed assembly—a generic kit of parts with no reference to other storefronts in the district. The painted metal crown, rather than providing a declarative punctuation for the structure, changes material, color, and plane, becoming a recessive, whispering ellipsis...petering into the sky as if it were a flying saucer about to disappear into orbit.

The body of the proposed structure is dressed in a system of terra-cotta fins. These "baguettes" lie between a forward brick frame and a recessed vertical frame. Rather than acting in a sculptural, planar, incised, or carved fashion—such as the benchmark terra-cotta styling of Harry B. Mulliken's 1903 Beaux-Arts Style Hotel Lucerne, they create a perforated facade, snapped in place, again discordant with the district's architectural fabric.

Despite the passive house aspirations of the design, these fixed baguettes provide little insulation despite their omnipresence. They ostensibly are included for sun-screening, and aesthetic purposes. These forms are designed at a seventeen degree angle

specifically intended to be an irritant to pigeons. Has this become the driving criteria for facade design?

The facade's overly demanding "dressing" plus its aggressive resetting of the datum make the statement: I'm big, I'm here, I'm important!

This is not an appropriate solution for this site, and ultimately, the community would not be gaining more by the proposed demolition. We are not in favor of this C of A.

Thank you for your consideration.