



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
119 West 87th Street
March 13, 2018**

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 119 West 87th Street, a neo-Grec style rowhouse designed by Increase M. Grenell and built in 1884. The application is to enlarge an existing rear yard addition.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to address both the specific details of this proposal as well as the wider public policy questions implicated in the Landmark Preservation Commission's approach to items like this one.

There is a tendency among the current Commission—and occasionally within our Committee as well—to look at proposals like this one and judge them permissible on the ground that “we have seen worse”. Indeed, we have seen more extreme proposals, and we have allowed *those* proposals. So why not this one? This approach forgets the intentions behind the very creation of the LPC. Just because something is not the worst does not deem it appropriate by default. Appropriateness is a standard that should be applied by the LPC in its evaluation of *any* application, for what it *is*, whether it is appropriate in and of itself—without continually falling back on past, potentially flawed decisions as guidance.

We find this proposal inappropriate because of the bulk the applicant seeks site atop this already bloated house, which in section resembles some sort of hulking steamship. Precedence of allowing similar bulk cannot erase its inappropriateness.

Given the LPC's proposal to amend and streamline the rules—that you will be considering in just two weeks, on Tuesday, March 27th—we are aware that today may be one of our last opportunities to testify on this type of application. In designing a massive rewrite of the rules, the LPC has unfortunately included numerous measures, which undermine those values that were the basis of this agency's inception. The landmark is no longer the client.

In the case of applications as harsh in their visible and physical impact as 119 West 87th Street, the process of approval should not shut out the public, and be left entirely to the staff—as talented and considerate as they may be. Our Committee thus respectfully requests that you reject the proposed modifications as inappropriate, and urges the LPC to reconsider the ways in which the proposed rule changes relegate similarly drastic interventions away from the realm of public review and comment.