



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
361 Central Park West
March 3, 2020**

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 361 Central Park West, a Beaux Arts Classical style church designed by Carrère & Hastings and built in 1899-1903. The application is to construct additions, replace stained glass and other special windows, alter entrances and replace doors, install signage and excavate at the cellar.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee stands in strong opposition to this application. While improvements have been made to the applicant's initial design proposal, these minor alterations are insufficient in outweighing the glaring desecration of Carrère & Hastings' architectural intent. In reality, the goals of the applicant and those of Carrère & Hastings are quite similar. Creating a building that would support a diverse and inclusive program by implementing sustainable building systems to maximize daylight and connect the church to the city is a mission that the First Church of Christ Scientist and Carrère & Hastings already achieved. It is a shame that the applicant is blind to the impressive nature of this existing landmark building.

The applicant's inability to recognize these qualities has led to a design that, though revised, remains incongruous with the existing landmark and is architecturally insensitive. The applicant seems to have understood these belabored criticisms, as evidenced in their revised inclusion of an architecturally unique terracotta tile screen that successfully differentiates the contemporary intervention and pays homage to the existing building. However, this single thoughtful addition is not enough. The applicant simply "fell flat" in their efforts to mimic the level of integration evident in the successful adaptive reuse projects that they cited as inspiration.

This application inadequately expresses the scale of its additions, while simultaneously obscuring the severity to which it alters the existing built fabric. Most of the provided views of the rooftop addition, expressed in the proposed design renderings and images of the massing mock-up, are either useless or edited and intentionally masked. However, in the views that inevitably expose the true nature of these additions, it becomes clear that the additions are extremely asymmetrical, too tall, and an unwanted, yet assertive, adjustment to the building's mass. While a rooftop terrace may seem like a pleasant idea, who would use this space, engulfed by mechanical and circulatory bulkheads, when they have free access to Central Park across the street?

This nearly two hundred-page proposal hardly mentions the removal of the original doors and original stone stairs from the front façade, an offense that should, in itself, bar this application

from approval. The voluminous presentation also fails to mention the sundry copper rooftop structures by Carrère & Hastings that will be removed without pause. The alterations to this building would alter the surrounding light and air quality in this predominantly residential neighborhood. Views of the proposed additions from Central Park would be glaringly noticeable. Through their design, the applicant makes clear their intentions to prioritize their own needs above those of the community they intend to serve.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee commends the Children's Museum of Manhattan in their efforts to return this individual landmark to public use but strongly opposes this proposal based on the applicant's inability to adapt the existing building in a way that appreciates its historic architectural qualities. There is a way to make this reuse work, but this proposal is not it.