



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
200 Central Park West – American Museum of Natural History
June 15, 2021**

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 200 Central Park West, a complex of museum and exhibition and support buildings, designed by Vaux and Mould; Cady, Berg and See; Trowbridge and Livingston; John Russell Pope; Charles Volz; and others, located within a park, and built between 1874 and 1935. This is an individual landmark that is also within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District. The Application is to remove a statue, modify stairs and paving, and install markers.

The Landmark West Certificate of Appropriateness Committee will be unequivocally clear that we 100% support removal and relocation of American Sculptor James Earle Fraser's *Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt* from its eight-decades long perch along Central Park West before Theodore Roosevelt Hall at the American Museum of Natural History.

Although some accounts argue that Fraser sought representation through inclusion, the art must be contextualized through today's lens, and these eyes witness a hierarchy of subordination, and a painful message—whether intended by the artist or not—that has no place in the public realm, on city-owned land.

Historic Preservation offers us a view to our past and can ignite a better understanding of craft, technique, use and values while raising many reflexive questions. Unlike architecture, civic art has an even deeper purpose to inspire and uplift. Today, Fraser's work does neither and in fact calls into question the very legacy it initially sought to promote.

While we support its removal, we further support its relocation. Whether to long-term storage, a contextualized exhibition, or simply for future study not only of Roosevelt and of his legacy but again, for our own understanding of our past, both good and bad.

Thank You.