



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the CB7 Full Board
6-16 West 77th Street
November 3, 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 6-16 West 77th Street, a Neo-Renaissance style apartment designed by Nathan Korn and built in 1927-28 from within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District. The application is to replace and enlarge a rooftop addition.

Like with many proposals, the LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee was offered a preview presentation of this project. Immediately following the October presentation, our Committee was equally split—half felt this could be appropriate if it were just the 17th floor, the other half, siding with preservation agreed that this was simply development. **Unlike** other proposals, the feedback kept returning—later that morning, that afternoon, and in calls and emails nearly daily in the days since. This “morning after” regret is partly addressed in the following brief testimony.

First and foremost, LANDMARK WEST is a preservation organization. The application under consideration seeks the removal of an original 17th floor penthouse and associated contributing features such as the glazed terra cotta cornice is outright inappropriate. Commonly accepted preservation practices responsive to the applicant’s stated dissatisfaction with the existing penthouse would be cleaning and repointing the brick, and returning original windows.

This building was designated over three decades ago and still manages to fulfill its original use. Because an eyes-wide-open individual purchases portions of a landmark—one of the less than 5% of buildings city-wide designated as such--does not in itself make their proposed alterations appropriate. Any alterations must be made with “due consideration for both the public interest in the maintenance of the structure and the landowner’s interest in use of the property.” The proposal serves only individual interests at the expense of the underlying structure. Further, what is most curious here is that as a co-op the majority of the landowners interest lies on the floors beneath this proposal.

6-16 West 77th Street is already approximately 1/3 overbuilt for its site. Yet, by cutting away staircases, labeling portions of the 16th floor space as “mechanical” and consolidating currently non-visible building services into a newly “found” 18th floor bringing them into public view

from multiple viewpoints including a scenic landmark, the applicant rationalizes even more bulk and yields themselves a triplex apartment.

The proposed design whose precedents all lie within verdant fields will instead be atop a 94-year old structure. With glass and steel contrasting the original buff brick and terra cotta, the public is asked to believe that adhering to the “memory” of a datum they propose to obliterate (and then bury under another floor) and painting metal to match the utilitarian structure supporting a water tower which is not a defining characteristic, makes this proposal contextual. Simply not so. A key part of the very purpose of landmarks is to have the actual thing, not merely memories.

These thin arguments underscore a disregard for the landmark and its defining characteristics.

Means, methods and aesthetics aside there is a greater issue at hand—is this how we see the future of our neighborhood? Consolidating and re-categorizing spaces? Disregarding our collective interests for personal use, and ever building up to undermine our past that so many generations have worked to protect?

This proposal is counter to the intentions of landmarking to “foster civic pride in the beauty and noble accomplishments of the past” and thus, the LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee urges CB7 to deny this application.