



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
6-16 West 77<sup>th</sup> Street  
November 16, 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 77<sup>th</sup> 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.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee was offered a preview presentation of this project. Immediately following the October presentation, the voting members of our Committee were evenly split—half felt this could be appropriate if it were just the 17<sup>th</sup> floor, the other half, siding with preservation argued that this was simply inappropriate development. Following the presentation, 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 suddenly making the Cooper Union and Columbia-educated Nathan Korn who designed this at mid-career before his untimely death by heart attack at age 48 a household name one week shy of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his passing.

The application under consideration seeks the removal of an original 17<sup>th</sup> floor penthouse and associated contributing features such as the glazed terra cotta cornice. In a search of our testimony, such sanctioned destruction would be an UWS-first for a contributing structure. As a preservation organization, LW! finds this to be outright inappropriate. Commonly accepted preservation practices responsive to the applicant’s stated dissatisfaction with the existing penthouse would be removing stucco, cleaning and repointing the brick, and even 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 purchased 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.

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

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

The proposed design whose precedents all lie within the verdant fields of suburban New Canaan Connecticut, and Plano Illinois, 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 rely 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?

If here, adjacent the thrice-stymied New-York Historical Society which in fact DOES serve a public role, then anywhere? Everywhere?

To cite Justice Brennan, “To protect a landmark, one does not tear it down. To perpetuate its architectural features, one does not strip them off...we must preserve them in a meaningful way...”

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 the LPC to deny this application.