



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Public Design Commission
Riverside Park, West 105th Street and Riverside Drive
October 16th, 2023**

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 the proposed reconstruction of stairs within Riverside Park, a Scenic Landmark, at 105th Street and Riverside Drive.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee has continued to review this proposal as additional original drawings have come to light, and we are disappointed that as stewards of this Scenic Landmark, the Parks Department continues to propose non-original utilitarian railings for a functional and ornate designed element of the park such as the 105th street staircase. The main explanation given as to why the alternate railings are instead proposed is cost. While cost is always a factor, it is never supposed to be a consideration with determining appropriateness for our NYC landmarks--whether within historic districts, interior, individual, or scenic. We also want to point out that despite the many times this came before CB7, it was never before CB7's Preservation Committee, as it should have been, since this is a Scenic Landmark and there is long standing precedent for joint meetings when landmarks overlap other committees.

The original condition is known, and well documented. As previously stated before the Community Board and discussed with Parks, our Committee sees this as not only a landmark issue but an issue of equity. Parks can readily replicate the proper railing details in the original material at the Rotunda at 79th Street, but is hesitant to do so for this application 26 blocks north. Our Committee strongly believes there is no excuse to not reinstate them in any location where they were originally designed for but removed from when undertaking restoration efforts. This is especially poignant because in this instance, where the lesser rails are being proposed, is a portion of the Scenic Landmark park which abuts streets with a lower overall area median income than at 79th Street.

Additionally, on page 18 of the presentation, the applicant compares an approved guardrail reconstruction within the park at 102nd Street with a utilitarian guardrail on a retaining wall *outside* the Scenic Landmark as justification for the choice of material and design. There are different criteria for reconstructions *within* scenic landmarks. This rationale, without proper

information, sadly led to an intrusion at 102nd Street. We need not replicate the mistake again, especially now that the full documentation of the original condition has come to light.

To further our sentiments, we found the LPC's advisory report stated our views most clearly:

However, the Commission finds that the historic guardrails that were removed prior to the designation of the scenic landmark were significant architectural features of the staircases and scenic landmark; and that the proposed guardrails will not replicate or closely recall the historic guardrails in terms of material, design or details. Therefore, the Commission staff recommends that ornate bronze guardrails, replicating the historic guardrails, be installed instead of the simply designed, black painted metal guardrails.

There are other options to consider such as alternate materials or a delay of action until appropriate funds are identified. Our committee is glad to see the restoration of the pavement stairs and that safety measures are being adhered to with new handrails. There is no equivalent need to rush the wrong guardrails now, which would create permanent damage to original fabric.

This guardrail has been absent for too long and now is the opportunity to restore it as designed and intended.

Thank You.