



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Public Design Commission
Prototypical Link5G, Citywide
December 13, 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 the design of prototypical communications structures (Link5G) for installation citywide. The application is presented by DoITT.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee is concerned about the continual cluttering of our streetscapes. While we may have all gotten a little bigger during the pandemic, few perhaps have grown at the rate of the LINK kiosks, which have both widened and more than tripled in height over five years.

When first introduced, LINK promised to replace pay phones and fire call boxes, offering to bring equity to internet access citywide for “free”. Now that the city has lost its fire call boxes, lost its payphones, and created 24/7 distractions of moving advertising at street level for block after block, only to be denied tens of millions of dollars from our coffers, we are simultaneously told that this just-installed infrastructure is obsolete and warned that we cannot have the promised infrastructure unless we give away more of the city. That is the definition of rewarding a job badly (or, as in this case, not even) done.

These kiosks are already large and obtrusive, yet with the applicant’s if-you-give-a-mouse-a-cookie model LINK will undoubtedly be asking for their glass of milk, napkin and broom in a moment. Sure, something nearly four times the size may add additional services but the deal on the table is not only a foreign design, but a full bait and switch. And this is just the Gen2 version after a few years. Imagine the ask in 2023. 2025?

Perhaps the City could easily install a k-cup reservoir and turn these pedestrian impediments into instant coffee stops, surely that too would fit within the proposed 28” width, equitably caffeinating the masses, and best yet, coffee has zero to do with providing equitable internet, but by the same logic, why not do it if it makes money?

New York City has some of the tallest buildings in the hemisphere; if height is a factor driving the design, it is time to work with landlords as cell phone companies have been doing since Motorola engineer Martin Cooper made the first cell phone call from Sixth Avenue at 53rd Street in April of 1973—45 years ago.

Built solutions (albeit without the advertising) already exist without the need for these additional structures.

Most importantly, the applicant shows no provisions for a smaller non-advertising option in historic districts as currently exists. Following lengthy testimony at the time these were first heard, the City understood the need to limit visual impact on these streets, which line landmarks --less than 5% of the buildings in NYC.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee urges the Public Design Commission to consider the cookie and if these structures are even necessary. And if you deem that they are, we urge your resolution to include language that these structures do not invade our existing historic district side streets. There is no need for this giveaway. We hope we will not be here in another five years again for something that if it continues at this rate will be over twelve stories in height.

Thank You.