



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
170 Central Park West
July 14, 2020**

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 170 Central Park West, The New-York Historical Society. An Individual Landmark within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District. This landmark is a Roman Eclectic style museum and library building designed by York and Sawyer and built in 1903-1908, with wings added in 1937-1938 by Walker and Gillette. The Application is to establish a master plan governing the future installation of windows.

The Landmark West Certificate of Appropriateness Committee often favors windows masterplans because they are a sign of commitment to the stewardship of an underlying landmark. They yield cohesion, provide the community with certainty, and often reflect the original architectural intent. This proposal fails each metric.

In the case of the New-York Historical Society, the cohesion already exists. It was even reaffirmed in 2011 during a prior C of A which sought matching bronze windows at altered openings. The cohesion is in large part because many windows exist just as York and Sawyer specified them in 1903. Bronze windows have a typical life span of approximately a century, in the current case, some are 117 years-old and counting.

The polluting aluminum substitutes the applicant seeks to use instead under this proposed masterplan have a typical life span of thirty years. This would mean four sets of aluminum windows, four times the scaffolding, and four instances when the masonry openings will be disturbed opposed to the one round if done properly in the intended original material.

While the applicant, with its eight-figure endowment argues that maintaining the bronze is cost prohibitive, it does not address the true-life cycle cost nor their years of failed maintenance exasperated by curatorial choices that created microclimates to erode the landmark from the inside out.

Without question, we live in very strange times today. Things are changing.

It seems as though one of those things is the sense of longevity and commitment to perpetuity.

In 1903, the board of the New-York Historical Society, the oldest museum in New York, vested in our city and our past committed to a York and Sawyer model which has happily exceeded its predicted lifespan. Today, the board's foresight falls far shorter.

To cite the museum's eleven founders, "Without the aid of original records and authentic documents...history will be nothing more than a well-combined series of ingenious conjectures and amusing fables." What then is a monument of knock-off facisimilies? An amusing fable?

The Landmark West Certificate of Appropriateness Committee urges the Commission to not codify the wrong, short-sighted choice that would all but defy the very intent of the windows masterplan. Sporting nine-year old bronze windows to the north, this masterplan would unlikely find its renewed aluminum cohesion for another 91-years—or until the fourth round of replacements.

New York deserves the best, and for an institution charged with protecting our past, we hope they would appreciate their own. Accepting this plan would ensure a cheapened landmark. It would not address the microclimate concerns and only add additional hardship to the underlying masonry shell.

We recommend denial of any windows masterplan proposal that does not follow the original material, detail and configuration for this individual landmark, designated July 19, 1966, 54-years ago this Saturday.

Thank You.