

LPC Applications 03-2628 & 03-2653 - 8 West 70th Street

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**Supporters of Protecting the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District
from the Proposed 14-Story Tower***List in Formation, 2/11/03***Elected Officials/Community Leaders**

Manhattan Borough President C Virginia Fields
 NYS Senator Thomas K Duane
 NYS Senator Eric T Schneiderman
 NYS Assembly Member Richard N Gottfried
 NYS Assembly Member Scott Stringer
 Manhattan Community Board 7
 Manhattan Community Board 8
 Phyllis Gunther District Leader 67 A D

Civic Organizations

Beachside Bungalow Preservation Association
 CIVITAS
 Coalition for a Livable West Side
 Committee for Environmentally
 Sound Development
 The Fine Arts Federation of New York
 Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts
 Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation
 Historic Districts Council
 Historic Neighborhood
 Enhancement Alliance, Inc
 LANDMARK WEST!
 Municipal Art Society
 Murray Hill Neighborhood Association
 Society for the Architecture of the City
 Women's City Club
 World Monuments Fund / V Flyer

Block Associations

West Side Federation of Neighborhood
 & Block Associations
 West 64th Street Block Association
 West 67th Street Committee
 (Numbers 2 15 17 27 33 39 40 45 50)
 West 69th Street Block Association
 West 75th Street Block Association
 West 77th Street Block Association
 Park West 77th Street Block Association
 West 78th Street Museum Block Association
 West 89th Street Block Association
 West 90th Street Block Association
 West 102-103rd Street Block Association
 Duke Ellington Neighborhood Association

Individuals

Alison Ames
 Ina Avrich
 Alain Bankier
 Jeff Byles
 Robert A Caro
 (Historian)
 Giorgio Cavaglieri FAIA
 Charles Church Esq
 Chris Cockfield
 Peter Coombs, AIA
 Anne Correa
 Kathleen Cuneo
 Marc Daniel, Esq
 Michael De Cuollo
 Andrew Dolkart
 (Architectural Historian)
 Richard Falk
 Martin Gallent
 Tom Giordano, Esq
 Judy Glassman
 Carol & William Greilsheimer
 Mark Hartnett
 Ashton Hawkins, Esq
 Joanna Hepworth
 Suzanne Herz
 Judith and Robert Hunt
 Robert Jacobson, Jr
 Peter Janovsky
 Peter Jennings
 Evalyn Kaufman
 Victor A Kovner, Esq
 Emily F Mandelstam
 Dana Miller
 Michael Mooney, BE, BSC
 Naomi Paley
 Stuart M Paley
 David Patterson
 Avra Petrides
 Linda Pogue
 Ron Prince
 Alice Pucknat
 Kathleen Randall

Individuals (cont.)

Richard Ray
 Joan Rome, Ph D
 Ned Rorem
 Susanne Szabo Rostock
 Richard Roth FAIA RIBA
 Arthur Rowe
 Julius Rudel
 Judy Samuels
 Tancred Schiavoni, Esq
 Neil Schlater -Booth
 Elliott Sclar, Ph D
 (Urban Planner)
 David Smiley
 Eliot Soffes, AIA
 David Stutzman
 Anna Taam
 Kent Wallgren
 Walter J Wilkie
 Lori Zabar, Esq
 Marjorie Zucker

Buildings/Co-op Boards

1 West 64th Street
 11 West 69th Street
 18 West 70th Street
 24 West 70th Street
 49 West 72nd Street
 25 Central Park West
 75 Central Park West
 80 Central Park West
 91 Central Park West
 101 Central Park West
 300 Central Park West

RE: Congregation Shearith Israel, 8 West 70th Street

No one seriously questions that a 14-story condominium tower 87% of whose bulk is positioned within the midblock is properly described as a midblock tower. In 1984 the City defined the "midblocks" adjacent to Central Park West as beginning 125 feet into the block. It classified these midblock R8-B, and found 85% of the structures within them to be complying and conforming - a high percentage of compliance!

The pattern of R8-B zoning runs north from 68th Street. Now, it is true that the Landmarks Commission is never - and should not be - bound by zoning in considering whether a project is or is not appropriate. Too many historic neighborhoods throughout the city are zoned in ways that directly *undermine* rather than enhance their fabric and character.

But, in this case, the Commission must recognize that the zoning is in such close alignment with the existing fabric and character of the neighborhood that it essentially served as a template for the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District designation in 1990. Reading the 1984 City Planning report and the 1990 Landmarks designation report is like reading two pages out of the same book. The language they use to describe the built character and significance of the Upper West Side is strikingly similar - the discussion of *human scale*, the fact that over 85% of the structures in the midblocks conform to the 'midblock' type, that rowhouses framed by tall buildings on the avenues present a *strong coherency* and are a major element in creating a *special sense of place* particular to this district on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Here, *both* the zoning *and* the designation report should be relied on as sources of essential guidance in a finding of appropriateness.

Nothing presently existing on the 70th Street midblock approaches 14 stories. Two non-complying, 9-story apartment houses from the 1920s *alone* break the 60-foot rowhouse character of this midblock.

Both the City Planning Commission when it mapped the R10-A and R8-B zoning pattern in this area and the Landmarks Preservation Commission when it designed the boundaries of the historic district were well aware of these kinds of occasional non-complying buildings in the midblocks. They also knew that some Central Park West apartment houses cut deeper than 125 feet into the midblock. And yet both agencies confirmed that the *predominant* character of the neighborhood was low-rise midblocks framed by high-rise avenues.

Misleading elevation drawings show the proposed 14-story condo tower nestling within a cocoon of 69th Street structures. Anyone walking on 70th Street would not be so deceived. They would see a tower rising head and shoulders above the Synagogue and its rowhouse neighbors to the north and west. And they would wonder whether this - a Central Park West building on a brownstone block - could happen on *their* block. Isn't this the very kind of non-compliance the historic district designation and the zoning were designed to prevent from spreading deeper into the area's midblocks?

To permit this midblock 14-story condo tower to proceed you must find it appropriate and that it relates harmoniously to the landmark and to buildings in the historic district of which it will become a part

We urge you, instead, to *disapprove* this Certificate of Appropriateness because:

- a) the proposed midblock, 14-story condo tower irretrievably diminishes the landmark - other speakers today will provide testimony on this account.
- b) it replaces a rowhouse scale midblock building with a high-rise tower unprecedented in a historic district midblock.

One final point: the mere availability of a special permit in the Zoning Resolution does not argue for its appropriateness in terms of the individual landmark, the historic district, or the zoning. The 74-711 provision allows flexibility so the new construction may conform more closely to the existing character of a neighborhood. It does not miraculously transform this or any other midblock site into an avenue site. This application should be disapproved.

Excerpts from Testimony and Letters
Submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Regarding 8 West 70th Street
as of February 11, 2003

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Relationship of the Proposed Tower to the Individual Landmark and the Central Park West Skyline

Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields

"This high structure vastly compromises the individual landmark, and immensely detracts from it at numerous vantage points."

LANDMARK WEST!

"Eight floors of approximately 3,500 square feet each, not including mechanicals, would rise up beyond the cornice line of the Synagogue and create a hulking presence that would compete visually with the Landmark as part of the Central Park West streetscape and sever its relationship with the predominantly low-rise midblock."

Giorgio Cavaglieri, FAIA

"Any higher structure would not only conflict with the beautiful design of the present building, but also interfere with the skyline of Central Park West which was the determining factor for the designation of that Historic District."

Relationship of the Proposed Tower to Existing Neighborhood Character

New York State Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried

"The 157-foot building would be 1.5 times the height of the adjacent building. It would be about 3 times the height of the brownstones that make up most of the block. It would be more than 2.5 times the ordinarily-permitted streetwall height for the site. It would also be several times the total bulk or FAR that would ordinarily be permitted for the site. If this building does not flunk the 'harmonious' test, what *does* it take to flunk?"

Historic Districts Council

"A building of this height, in the middle of the block, is totally incompatible...The block in question was zoned R8B, so that new construction would be compatible with the traditional roughhouses that define the neighborhood...[The proposed building] is effectively a Central Park West building in the middle of the block."

Society for the Architecture of the City

"We would be very alarmed to see what to us would be an unprecedented move for the LPC: ignoring the existing zoning to approve a new building whose bulk, height and massing substantially *exceeds* what zoning would allow, in a context of smaller buildings, and in a zoning district that was mapped specifically to limit out-of-context construction and preserve the character of an existing neighborhood

Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts

"[B]oth the East and West Sides share a common and precious characteristic: low rise mid-blocks of residential buildings. This building pattern is essential to preserve in order to maintain the sense of place of both neighborhoods...It is eminently clear that the proposed 14-story building is not harmonious to the landmarked synagogue itself, nor to the dominant character of the mid-blocks in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District."

Andrew Scott Dolkart, architectural historian

"Permitting this speculative apartment building with synagogue use at the base would open the door to additional out-of-scale construction in the low-rise zoning district and within the Upper West Side Historic District

Dr. Elliott D. Sclar, urban planner

"[The proposal] will irreparably harm the balanced land use regulatory policy that has helped the make this area one of America's leading urban neighborhoods...The contextual zoning and landmark designations that guide this neighborhood's growth and change...were thoughtfully designed and democratically adopted policies intended to fairly balance the maintenance of this neighborhood's charms with the real needs for added development. This project will destroy this careful balance."

"The Upper West Side today is a delicate balance of intense and highly congested urban living that is granted the respite to remain vital by its lower-scaled midblocks. Once the scale of the midblocks is breached in one place, the case for preservation in all these others will be severely compromised."

LANDMARK WEST!

"A unique and enviable situation exists in the midblocks of the Upper West Side...where Landmarks protection and zoning really go hand in hand. Here, the zoning is perfectly in line with the goals of the historic district, and vice versa [quotes from designation report and zoning report]." -

Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

"We strongly believe that contextual zoning and zoning which has been crafted to ensure design compatibility in historic neighborhoods should be strengthened and protected, rather than weakened...It is unclear to us how this standard has been met with this proposal."

The Design of the Proposed Tower

Historic Districts Council

"[The proposed building's] orientation is problematic. The entrance to the building is on West 70th Street. Yet, the structure reads as a Central Park West building. The east facade, facing Central Park West, is actually the side facade, not the front, but is designed as such. The west facade, equivalent of the rear facade...is very visible along West 70th Street. This is the facade of the building that would normally face the garden core."

74-711

Municipal Art Society

"The Committee felt the preservation purpose as described was not compelling enough to warrant [authorizing the shifting of bulk under 74-711]. The restorative elements mentioned to us, such as replacement of the roof and addressing water damage, appeared to the Committee to be more on the order of routine maintenance

LANDMARK WEST!

"Essentially, Congregation Shearith Israel is asking the City and the community to accept a "trade-off" - the historic, low-scale character of the district for some direct benefit to the Landmark Synagogue. However, the detrimental impact that the proposed building would have on both the Synagogue and the historic district defeats any preservation purpose that could be served."

New York State Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried

"CSI has not provided any evidence that the funds derived from the project would support any restoration or maintenance of the landmark beyond what it *has been doing* and will in any event *continue* to do...It cannot be said to 'contribute to a preservation purpose.'"

Ashton Hawkins, Esq

"The exploitation of soft sites by non-profit institutions, using such aids as air rights transfers and special zoning deals, must not be encouraged if it works to the detriment of neighborhoods."

Julius Rudel, neighbor

"To give in and allow this project is to take the first steps down a slippery slope. How long will it be before the churches on Central Park West and 68th and 65th Streets also request variances along these lines?"

Norman Marcus, Esq.

"[T]here are at least half a dozen institutions waiting to apply the precedent [that would be set by an approval of this application]: The Ethical Culture Society, The Holy Lutheran Church, The Second Church of Christ Scientist, The Universalist Church, The New-York Historical Society, The American Museum of Natural History, and The First Church of Christ Scientist. In all of these cases we have significant, underbuilt structures which punctuate the historic Central Park West wall."

North side of W. 70th Street between
CPW & Columbus Ave. – view
looking west from 8 W. 70th St.
showing “brownstone” block

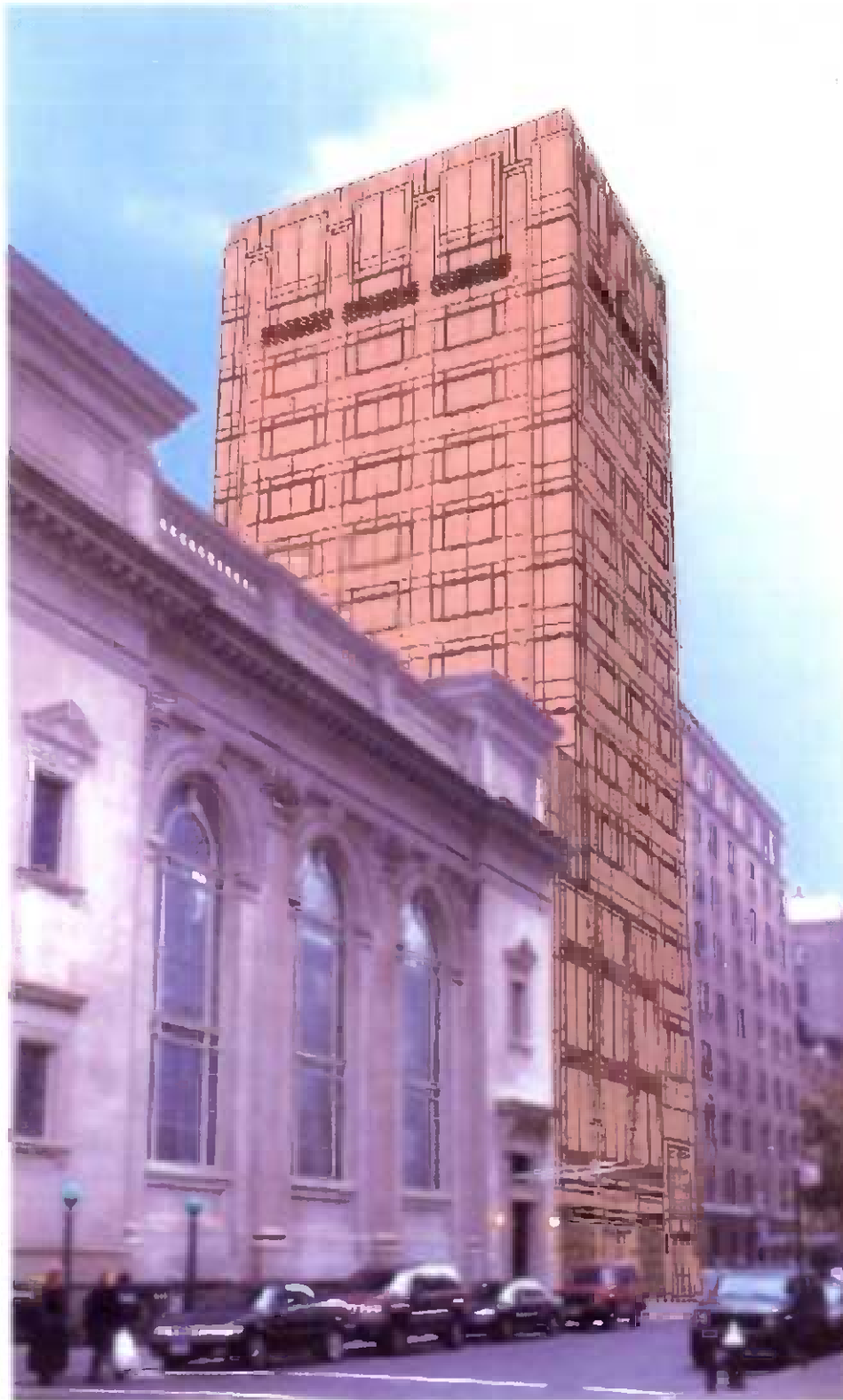
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8 W. 70th St. – CURRENT view
looking west from CPW @ 70th St.



8 W. 70th St. – PROPOSED view
looking west from CPW @ 70th St.



8 W. 70th St. – PROPOSED view
looking east from 70th St. midblock



8 W. 70th St. – EXISTING view
looking east from 70th St. midblock

