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February 7, 2008

Ms. Arlene Simon, President  
Landmarks West!  
45 West 67th Street  
New York, NY 10023

Re: Congregation Shearith Israel  
6-10 West 70th Street  
Review of Variance Request  
Project No. 121701

Dear Ms. Simon:

I am writing in connection with the proposed development proposed by Congregation Shearith Israel (CSI) on the site at 6-10 West 70th Street and its impact on neighboring residential buildings, in particular 91 Central Park West, 9 West 69th Street, and 18 West 70th Street.

As I understand it, CSI and its Architects, Platt Byard Dovell White Architects, propose to demolish the existing four-story school structure adjacent to the CSI Synagogue and replace it with a mixed-use building housing condominium units as well as multi-purpose rooms, offices, classrooms, bathrooms and other ancillary spaces associated with the Synagogue.

(This understanding is based on review of Drawings P-1 through P17, and AOR-A-1 to AOR-A-14 prepared by Platt Byard Dovell White Architects, dated October 22, 2007, and stamped and signed by Ray Dovell.)

It is my further understanding that two schemes are presented in the above-mentioned architectural drawings, a "compliant" scheme illustrating a structure designed "as-of-right" per existing zoning, and a "non-compliant" scheme showing a larger building, which is predicated on receipt of multiple variances to be considered by the Board of Standards and Appeals.

Our comments are focused on the differences between the "compliant" and "non-compliant" schemes, and the potential impact of said differences on the adjacent residential properties referenced above. In connection with this exercise, I have visited the building at 91 Central Park West, including 'F' line apartment and rear courtyard, and reviewed floor plans of that building as well as its relative disposition vis-à-vis the proposed adjacent development. While at this property, I viewed the neighboring property at 9 West 69th Street. I am independently familiar with the building at 18 West 70th Street, having acted as architectural consultant to the Board of this cooperative in connection with recent Local Law 11 repairs.

The differences between the compliant, "as-of-right" scheme and the larger, bulkier building are illustrated in Platt Byard Dovell White Architects' Section Drawing 1/P-3, which indicates that both building height and setback variables would exceed permitted limits under applicable zoning and would require variances.

With regard to height issues, both the overall height proposed in the non-compliant scheme (at over 105', or 30' taller than permitted) and the building "base" height (almost 95' shown, 60' permitted) would significantly impact the neighboring building at 18 West 70th Street. That building includes approximately 10 lot-line windows on its east-facing wall, serving apartments at the upper three floors of this residential cooperative. The "as-of-right" scheme, illustrated by Platt Byard Dovell White Architects in their Drawing AOR-A-4A, shows the limits of the proposed building envelope (as permitted) and all of the lot-line windows at 18 West 70th Street would remain unobstructed. The non-compliant scheme, being taller and as shown on Drawing P-4A, would permanently block seven of those existing windows, with obvious negative effect on the residents in those apartments.

The rear courtyard setback requirements call for a 30' deep rear yard setback above a 23' base elevation height. As proposed (the non-compliant scheme), this setback would be reduced to 20' for the approximately 2-1/2 stories (or 26') above the first floor (base) level. As a result, several apartments in the 91 Central Park West building (including Apts. 3, 4 and 5F, 3, 4 and 5E) would experience diminished light and view depth from their apartment windows in the living room and master bedroom spaces (F line) and living room (E line).

A similar reduction would result in apartments at floors 7, 8, and 9 due to the proposed rear "setback above base" which reduces by 10' this requirement. All of these proposed encroachments are clearly shown on Platt Byard Dovell White Architects' Drawing P-3. These additions to the permitted building footprint at CSI's proposed construction would also negatively impact the townhouse at 9 West 69th Street, which is situated immediately to the west of 91 Central Park West, and backs onto the CSI property in question at the western end.

It would appear that the non-residential spaces shown on the Platt Byard Dovell White Architects' drawings could be readily accommodated within the limits of the envelope of the building as prescribed by current zoning. Consequently, one must assume that the requested variances are prompted by commercial interests in that additional for-sale residential condominium unit space can be constructed to the benefit of CSI. As has been outlined above, the granting of such variances would be to the detriment of neighboring residential owners.

If you have any questions, please contact our office.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles DiSanto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a distinct end stroke.

Charles DiSanto, Principal