



West End Preservation Society Statement before the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission in Support of the Proposed Riverside-West End District Extension I.

3/22/2011

Good Afternoon, Chair Tierney and Commissioners,

My name is Richard Emery and I am speaking today as President and co-founder of the West End Preservation Society.

The West End Preservation Society strongly supports the proposed designation of the Riverside-West End Historic District Extension I.

As noted by the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission in December, 1989 for designation of the Riverside-West End Historic District: "among its important qualities, the Riverside-West End Historic District is defined by a remarkably large concentration of architecturally distinctive and unspoiled examples of residential buildings of high quality; that these residential buildings are characteristic of the development of the Upper West Side west of Broadway during the period from 1884 to 1939 and that the district encompasses a number of residential building types representing different phases of development."

The West End Preservation Society acknowledges the past findings of the Landmarks Preservation Commission and believes this same reasoning, reinforced by the conclusions of Andrew S Dolkart in his *West End Avenue Survey*, previously submitted to the Commission, supports the extension of the boundaries the way it has been proposed. This district extension embodies the special character, historic and aesthetic interest that defines a historic district.

Step foot onto West End Avenue at 79th St and look northward; you are treated to a vista which illustrates this "sense of place". The two major development phases of West End Ave are visually described in the architecture: brownstones dating back to 1886 and Beaux-Arts French Flats from 1898 alongside a bounty of harmonious apartment buildings, designed by preeminent architects working in Manhattan at the beginning of the 20th C: George Pelham, Schwartz & Gross, Neville & Bagge to name but a few, many of their other buildings already enjoying landmark status-some just steps away-on the Avenue.

Sense of place also embodies the human experience and as author Kent Ryden describes it: "the place has become a shaping partner in our lives, we partially define ourselves in its terms, and it carries the emotional charge of a family member..."

The Riverside-West End Historic District Extension I is most definitely such a place.

Broadway with its historic apartment houses and the 1890's First Baptist Church; West End Avenue: designed as a commercial-free, residential boulevard - first with single family row houses and revisited with grand apartment buildings; Riverside Drive, conceived by Frederick Law Olmsted: its magnificent homes, a graceful arc following the Hudson River.

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Join that with all the cross streets that connect these Boulevards, which include some of the most historically and aesthetically significant townhouses on the Upper West Side by architects such as Clarence True and C.P.H. Gilbert. Together they weave an astounding tapestry of not just architecture but a story of daily life. Remove any one part and you irrevocably destroy the bigger picture. That is the reality we are facing today.

Change is inevitable. When such transformations do take place we need our neighborhoods to have the protection and guidance of Landmarks' Designation. That is why we are here, to avail ourselves of the authority, within the City Charter, that this Commission has to protect this cultural heritage. So that residents standing on West End Avenue at 79th St in the year 2100 will feel the strength, vitality and the same "sense of home" that has been enjoyed on these streets since the late 1800's. You have the power to make that happen. We urge you to make that happen.

West End Preservation Society is proud to stand with our neighbors, fellow preservationists, Upper West Side community groups and our elected officials to support this designation in its entirety. Thank you.

West End Preservation Society