



West End Preservation Society Statement before the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission in Support of the Proposed West End-Collegiate Historic District Extension **June 28, 2011**

Good afternoon Chair Tierney, Commissioners and Staff. My name is Richard Emery. I am speaking, today, on behalf of the West End Preservation Society and on behalf of Erika Petersen and Josette Dunlop, the heart and soul of this organization. We support the extension of the West End-Collegiate Historic District as proposed.

We believe this expansion is a necessary step and meets the criteria set forth by the Commission. It will elevate the companion buildings that surround the current boundaries, to the same level of protection bestowed on the cluster of buildings already designated in this area.

The same distinguished architects, such as George Pelham, Rosario Candela and Lamb & Rich, whose buildings are landmarked throughout West End Avenue, are represented in this extension.

The architectural styles - characteristic of the periods of the two major development chapters of West End Avenue - Queen Anne, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Flemish and others, flow so effortlessly together that wandering among the Avenues and intersecting streets, you are never quite conscious of where the current historic district begins or ends, unless you glance up at a street sign.

Together with historical significance, we find aesthetically significant buildings in this area. Some of the more spectacular examples of town houses and row houses, dating back to the late 1800's, stand side-by-side grand apartment buildings by Schwartz & Gross and Emery Roth.

There is also a rich cultural history to be preserved and a sense of community that epitomizes this area. "Sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together", as defined in the *Psychological Sense of Community: Theory of McMillan & Chavis (1986)*.

Historic districts take this definition to the next level. Residents have these qualities reinforced along with a sense of place, a sense of identity and common goals.

This section of the upper west side has long been a highly desirable community. Described as a first class residential neighborhood by travel guides, this proposed district offers proximity to long standing businesses on Broadway, visited by travelers from all over the world.

These streets have welcomed home artists, writers, musicians and actors since the early 1900's and there is a charm and vibrancy characteristic to the area.

Historic districts offer developers and owners a sense of economic security and stability. Through landmark protections, owners are safe in the knowledge that their significant investment cannot be jeopardized by a lack of concern or actual defacement by their neighbors. They know their neighborhood will continue to exhibit the same standards that attracted them to the area, in the first place.

Nation wide, research has consistently concluded that property values in historic districts appreciate at faster rates than similar non-designated neighborhoods. Embracing the remaining vulnerable streets in this proposal can only result in positive movement forward.

Reinvesting in our older buildings is essential to the future of this city and makes good economic sense. According to *The Economics of Historic Preservation*, new construction costs are divided in a 50-50 split for labor & materials. In renovations, however, approximately 60% -70% of total costs are for labor. Renovation labor means local labor, means hiring local artisans - thereby conserving skills in vanishing trades and means using local materials. This has a direct result of putting money back into the local economy.

This proposed district will continue to be a vibrant and fluid area. West End Preservation Society hopes that its permutations will have the guidance, experience and resources that the Landmarks Preservation Commission has to offer.

We look toward the day when Gilbert Schellenger's 1895 turreted row house, the incredible Level Club, along with what remains of Charles T Mott's row houses all have a seat at the table of landmark protection.

West End Preservation Society stands together with our neighbors, Elected Officials, community groups and fellow preservationists in support of this extension. I thank the Commission for bringing forth this proposal and the opportunity to be heard.

West End Preservation Society