

August 5, 2008

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED NEW BUILDING ON A SURFACE PARKING LOT, RESTORATION OF AN EXISTING GARAGE BUILDING AND A NEW ADDITION ABOVE THE GARAGE AT 19-25 WEST 20th STREET IN THE LADIES' MILE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Good day, Chairman Tierney and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy has reviewed the proposal for a new sixteen-story building, the restoration of an existing seven-story garage, and a three-story addition to the garage at 19-25 West 20th Street.

The Conservancy applauds the proposed restoration of the 1926-27 garage building. Repointing and repairing the brick façade, and restoration of the original multi-pane steel windows will ensure that the building remains in good shape. A restoration of the ground floor including paint removal, and new painted and neon signage based on the original, will be a benefit to the entire block.

The Conservancy appreciates that the architects have responded to community concerns on the design of the infill sixteen-story residential structure. The design does relate to other buildings on the block in its articulation of base, shaft, and capital. It also has an entryway that complements the storefronts that are typical on this block, although there is no retail use planned for the ground floor. The design, however, does not relate to its neighbors in two ways: its minimal use of masonry on a block dominated by stone, brick, limestone, and terra cotta, and its height, which will make it the tallest building on the mid-block.

The Conservancy is also concerned about the proposed rooftop addition on the existing garage. Clearly, it is designed to contrast with the garage, a strategy we support, but the execution is too bulky and visible. A two-story addition, set further back, and less visible from the street would be more appropriate.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Conservancy's views.