

June 28, 2011

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE N.Y.C. LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF THE WEST END -- COLLEGIATE HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION

Good afternoon, Chair Tierney and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of the Landmarks Conservancy.

Twenty-eight years ago the Conservancy enthusiastically testified in favor of the West End Collegiate Historic District, recognizing the exceptional group of row houses at the District's core. We are very pleased to be here today, to support designation of the extension, and the equally significant array of row houses and apartment buildings within it. Like the original district, the extension is composed of structures representing several phases of residential development, designed by prominent architects of 19th and 20th centuries.

This District offers a master class in masonry residential buildings from those years. It starts with brownstone and limestone row houses, continues in two major phases of apartment buildings in limestone and brick, and finds a post-War expression in the mid-century Schwab Building. The styles range from Romanesque and Renaissance revival, to Queen Anne and neo-Grec to streamlined modern. They are decorated with rustication, sculptural stone details, molded brick, and terra cotta. Across the District the asymmetrical massing and varied roof lines of the row houses form an attractive compliment to the stately symmetry of the classical apartment buildings. In total, this District conveys an intact and coherent sense of place.

Historic district designation stabilizes communities and improves property values. Just as designation has benefited the West End Collegiate District, this extension will enhance the neighborhood, ensuring that any alterations are guided by the Landmarks Law.

The Conservancy is pleased to join with neighbors, public officials, and preservationists in support of this designation. In particular we are grateful to the West End Preservation Society for initiating the effort to expand the District and to the Landmarks Commission for acting with speed. We look forward to supporting the next phase of Upper West Side historic district expansion, which, when complete, will recognize in full the tremendous architectural heritage which distinguishes this section of the City. And as always, we are happy to offer the assistance of our Historic Properties Fund, Sacred Sites Program, and Technical Services staff to the owners and users of buildings in the extension.

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