

LANDMARK WEST!

THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

December 2015

The special character and architectural richness of Central Park West and its environs are apparent to all who walk its streets... truly a civic treasure.

~ Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

December 21, 1987, letter to then-Chair of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission Gene A. Norman*

Dear Members and Friends of LANDMARK WEST!:

Twenty-five years ago, LW! caught lightning in a bottle.

The “lightning” was nothing less than the soul of our Upper West Side neighborhood. The “bottle” was the **Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District**, encompassing an astounding 2,020 buildings designated in one fell swoop by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) in 1990.

We had a little help (see Mrs. Onassis’s statement above).

Founded in 1985, LANDMARK WEST! led the five-year campaign to achieve this district’s designation. And for 30 years, LW! has continued to carry the torch for all Upper West Side landmarks from 59th to 110th Street, Riverside Park to Central Park—up from 337 in 1985 to over 3,500 in 2015.

Unlike many groups that coalesce around a single, lightning-rod issue, then disband once the fight is won or lost, LW! has stood the test of time. LW! continues to actively seek and achieve new, worthy landmark designations. We tackle citywide policy issues that hit home in our neighborhood. We are a force with which every would-be West Side developer must contend. New York City needs LW!. And LW! needs you.

Please don’t let 2015 end without making a significant contribution to LW! Whether it’s your **annual membership renewal** (please contact us at 212-496-8110 or landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org to check on your membership status), **a first-time membership, or an extra special 30th-anniversary gift**, it’s all significant. Really, any size contribution helps LW! lead the ongoing campaign to preserve the Best of the West. For your convenience, a reply envelope is enclosed (make your check payable to LANDMARK WEST!). Or visit www.landmarkwest.org to give online. Or call us to find out about stock gifts (we’re full service!).

* Gene A. Norman is our honoree on Monday, December 14, 2015 – read on!

Open, please

2015 has been some year.

Before we launch into dramatic tales of wins, losses, and continuing sagas, here's some truly terrific news. We're excited to report that **Gene A. Norman**—architect, preservation advocate, and the former LPC Chair (1983-1989) to whom Mrs. Onassis made her case for protecting New York City's largest historic district—will be honored by LW! and his many admirers on **Monday, December 14, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm**. (This is a ticketed event, so please contact LW! or visit bit.ly/LW30thAnniversary for more details.)



Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Gene A. Norman testifying in 1984 to protect the NYC Landmarks Law.
Credit: Albany Press 1984.

Together, we will gather at none other than the **Fourth Universalist Society**, a.k.a. “Landmark on the Park,” at Central Park West and 76th Street. Here, LPC Chair Gene Norman presided over the 16-hour public hearing (January 11, 1988, 10:00am until January 12, 1988, 1:00am!) to which LW! turned out hundreds of neighbors, scholars, and civic advocates (including former Mayor John Lindsay, in a rare public appearance) to make a successful case for a six-fold increase in the number of official landmarks on the Upper West Side.

That was then. This is now. Landmark preservation has always been a hard climb in New York City. The going has never been tougher.

- **The Upper West Side is a target of major new development** under Mayor de Blasio's controversial proposals to raise height limits by as much as 50 feet (the equivalent of five floors) throughout the city. LW! commissioned a study by BFJ Planning that is helping to raise awareness of how our city's hard-won zoning and historic district protections would be devastated by this ill-conceived juggernaut masquerading as an “affordable housing” plan. Really, it is just one more blatant giveaway to big real-estate developers.
- We are leaders of efforts to protect New York's Landmarks Law against proposed legislation—Intro. 775—that would **severely weaken the LPC's ability to designate future landmarks**. City Council members (lobbied by the powerful Real Estate Board of New York) held a public hearing in September 2015, attended by more than one hundred citizens and organizations outspoken in their concerns about this bill.
- We continue to defend Upper West Side “landmarks in limbo,” **the former IRT Powerhouse** (McKim Mead & White, 1904) and **St. Michael's Episcopal Church complex** (Robert W. Gibson, 1890-1913). Both sites—for many years on our Wish List of landmark designation priorities—were targets of LPC Chair (and recent de Blasio appointee) Meenakshi Srinivasan's misguided 2014 plan to remove nearly 100 sites from its calendar of landmarks under

consideration.* Landmark protection of both the Powerhouse (first heard in 1979) and St. Michael's (first heard in 1980) has been stymied by owner opposition—and the LPC's unwillingness to stand up for the public interest—for decades. (Created to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the people of New York, the Landmarks Law wisely does not require individual owner consent for designation).

- With foresight, LW! commissioned a 2007 professional study that predicted the potential for 10 new towers(!) along Central Park West. In today's overheated market, our forecast is more likely than ever to become reality. Even as we push back against inappropriate development on individual sites, we are helping to advance **New Yorkers for a Human-Scale City, a citywide movement** to stop development trends that manipulate and exploit existing regulations—for example, the unscrutinized assemblage and transfer of development “rights” to create 100-story-plus mega-towers. Please sign the online petition at www.humanscale.nyc!
- Since the American Museum of Natural History announced plans to build a 218,000-square-foot addition—called the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation—in the open space of Theodore Roosevelt Park a year ago, we have worked closely with neighbors to articulate **serious concerns about impacts on the special environment surrounding the Museum** (an Individual Landmark located in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District). Our message: the park is a treasured community resource (rated one of the top five small parks in New York City by the organization New Yorkers for Parks), not a development site. The Museum has now scaled back its proposal. We remain vigilant.

* The former IRT Powerhouse occupies an entire city block between 58th and 59th Streets, Eleventh to Twelfth Avenue. The St. Michael's Episcopal Church complex is located on Amsterdam Avenue between 99th and 100th Streets.

Over, please.



LANDMARK WEST! 30TH ANNIVERSARY!

Do your part in passing the torch in 2015!

Kate Wood, Executive Director 2001-2012, new President and CEO
Arlene Simon, President 1985-2015, new Non-Executive Chairman

Please renew your membership today!

\$50 Steward (*\$25 Year-End Special!*) – discounted priority admission for one to public programs such as lectures, walking tours, and workshops

\$75 Partner – 2-for-1 admission to public programs (see above)

\$150 Family – "Partner" benefits, plus free admission to special family-friendly programs offered throughout the year

\$250 Allies – "Family" benefits, plus advance ticket offers for special events

\$500 Defenders – "Allies" benefits, plus invitation for one to be our guest at exclusive special events

\$1000 Best of the West – "Allies" benefits, plus invitations for two to be our guests at exclusive events

\$2,500+ Visionaries – “Best of the West” benefits, plus special acknowledgement in printed materials and website

Extra Special 30th-Anniversary Gift \$ _____ (any amount helps!)

Please provide your contact information on the reverse side of this form.

For more details on these projects and more, **please visit our newly updated website (www.landmarkwest.org)!** There, you can also explore our calendar of upcoming walking tours, lectures and other public programs.* And you can learn more about **our youth education program, *Keeping the Past for the Future***, which brings LW! professional staff educators into classrooms where they teach 2,000 students each year about neighborhood history, architectural design, and civic engagement. This is one of the programs your support of LW! helps underwrite!

If you've read this far—thank you!—then you understand why your continued involvement and support is so important to us and the sustained vitality of the Upper West Side. Protecting our neighborhood takes energy, grit, focus and expertise—all of which LW! has in ample supply. But they don't come free. We run a small, tight ship, not a luxury liner. A lean, capable staff. In-kind office space for 30 years, significant pro-bono services, and dedicated volunteers.

All this means that your contributions get spent on *advocacy*, not overhead. There's really no better way to invest in the future of our—*your*—neighborhood, for this generation and those to come.

Thank you, as always, for your generosity and activism. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

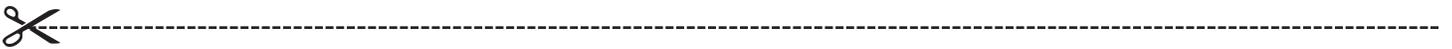


Arlene Simon
Founder & President (1985-2015)
Chairman



Kate Wood
President

* Remember that LW! membership has its privileges, including discounts on walking tours, lectures and workshops. Please make sure we have **your email address** to notify you about upcoming events!



Name(s): _____

Address: _____ Apt. # (required by post office): _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email (very important for upcoming events!): _____ Phone: _____

- This is a new address
- My company has a matching gift program

Make your check payable to LANDMARK WEST!

To give online, please visit www.landmarkwest.org

If you would like to make a contribution of stock, please contact us at (212) 496-8110 or landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org.