



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Public Design Commission  
The 79th Street Boat Basin and Boathouse  
December 16, 2024**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side. The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the proposal to reconstruct the 79th Street Boat Basin, including the construction of a boathouse.

LANDMARK WEST's Certificate of Appropriateness Committee understands the damage imposed by superstorm Sandy and the need for the replacement of the original boathouse. After reviewing the proposal for the seventh time since 2021, we remain dissatisfied with the results, believing the boathouse design poses adverse effects on nearby historic properties and notably obstructs clear views of the Hudson River.

The boat basin at 79th Street is surrounded by the National Register of Historic Places-listed Riverside Park and Riverside Drive Historic District, including contributing resources to the Historic District such as the West 79th Street Rotunda Pedestrian Plaza, the West 79th Street traffic circle & ramp and a section of the Henry Hudson Parkway running from West 72nd Street north to St. Clair Place. Riverside Park is also a NYC LPC designated Scenic Landmark. These sites will be impacted by the expansion of this proposal if it moves forward.

The redesign by ARO through the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation proposes a one-story boathouse elevated on pilings. At 3,800 square feet, the latest proposal is 61% of the size of the original 2021 dock house proposal. A 'compromise' was reached with the latest design that lowered the dock house from a two-story structure to a one-story structure. However, the proposed design will occupy nearly five times the space of the current, dilapidated dock house. We share the community's concern that the proposed boathouse has the potential to significantly block views of the Hudson River for neighbors living along Riverside Drive and those who want to enjoy views from Riverside Park.

The excessive height and size of the proposed boat house, however, is not our only point of concern. The proposed materials of the design are entirely out of context with the aesthetics of the surrounding scenic landscape. Ecological impacts aside, we are concerned that with the increased development of the dock, this once local boat basin will turn into a full-fledged marina which looks to serve only an elite few of the community while blocking river access for the many.

Our Committee would like to see a smaller boathouse, which better respects the waterfront and shares a material palette native to the Scenic Landmark Riverside Park. Given the current excessive size, we would hope the program could be reduced to the bare minimum, and that the finished facility be accessible to all park goers. In a City which strives for equity, yet has cut funding to libraries and education and earmarks approximately 0.5% of its overall budget to Parks, one hopes that it is not merely spending \$90 million to better serve the interest of a few dozen pleasure boat owners at the expense of everyone else.