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July 22, 2014

Commissioner Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor, North
New York, NY 10007

Testimony on 205 West 79th Street
Re: 15-9134 – Block 1227, lot 27

My name is Helen Rosenthal and I am the City Council representative for the 6th district which includes the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Thank you for the opportunity to comment today on the certificate of appropriateness for 203-209 W 79th st on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and as part of the Central Park West Historic District.

Let me begin by stating unequivocally that I am opposed to this application to demolish the existing building and construct a new building. This building is a part of the historic district on the Upper West Side, not because of its unique charm and detailing - those were stripped away long ago when it was converted from a group of row houses and combined into one apartment building in the 1970s - but because the existing building and dimensions along the entire block allow for the unique qualities and characters that make up the historic district. Its height, in a mix with other buildings on the block allow for views of other unique buildings, such as the Lucerne, and allow for the air and light that make that area so special.

I am not an architect nor have skills in assessing a buildings' structure. I am, however, a longtime resident of the UWS, I represent the residents of the UWS and I know an UWS building when I see one. This new building is NOT an UWS building and has no place within the historic district. The terraces, the height, the coloring, the windows, and the storefront area do not, in any way, resemble, reflect or reference what we all understand to be UWS buildings within the historic district.

Not only is it inappropriate in appearance and height, but it will irreparably harm the unique character of the district, changing the very nature of the block and hence how the block is experienced as a whole. Gone will be the wonderful views looking east of that side of the Lucerne Hotel and its marvelous pink facade; gone will be the light that reflects onto the row houses on 80th st from the south; and gone will be the limited scale that we all hoped would be preserved with the historic district designation and has become so difficult to find in Manhattan.

Preservation of that sense of scale, the mix of midsize and smaller buildings, allows a neighborhood to keep its integrity even as it grows and undergoes inevitable change. That is what a historic district should mean. I do not ask nor expect that all new building cease but that what building does take place preserves the character of the neighborhood. This proposal does not.

I urge you to reject this proposal outright. It has no place on this block.

Sincerely,

Helen Rosenthal