

ROBERT A. CARO

February 2, 2003

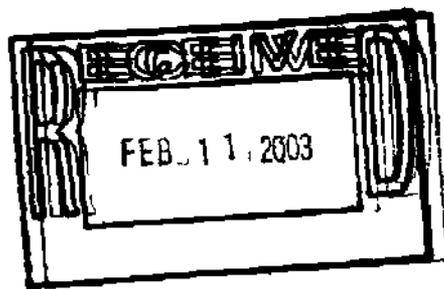
Mr. Robert Tierney  
Chairman, Landmarks Preservation Committee  
One Center Street, Ninth Floor  
New York, N.Y. 10007

Dear Mr. Tierney:

I am writing to express my opposition to a proposal by Congregation Shearith Israel at 8 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street which would violate the zoning codes established for the Central Park West District. I object ~~because it would set a dangerous precedent.~~ If you walk along Central Park West today there are a number of low-rise religious buildings whose membership could, for the same reasons, request the same series of "waivers," "variances," and "special permits" as has been set before you today by the Congregation Shearith Israel. Setting a precedent is often only the first step in changing existing rules and regulations.

Furthermore, if we grant a special exemption to the Congregation Shearith Israel to alter the "contextual zoning district" of the Upper West Side and allow it to construct a building higher than the 125 feet allowed mid-block, it will not only alter the nature Seventieth Street block but will endanger the entire West Side Historic District. It is a district -- a neighborhood -- a fabric whose parts fit together and complement each other. One particularly vital piece of the fabric is the low-rise nature of the mid blocks. This is a key element in the delicate balance between high rise and low rise buildings which make this area so harmonious.

There were, moreover, other excellent reasons for establishing zoning regulations limiting the height of mid-block buildings in this district. None of those reasons have changed. There exist sufficient areas adjacent to the West Side Historic District which have no height restrictions which provide adequate areas for high rise development -- south towards Columbus Circle and beyond, and west of Broadway. If, for no other reason, the area should be preserved as an alternative to high rise neighborhoods.



Cordially,  
*Robert A. Caro*  
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