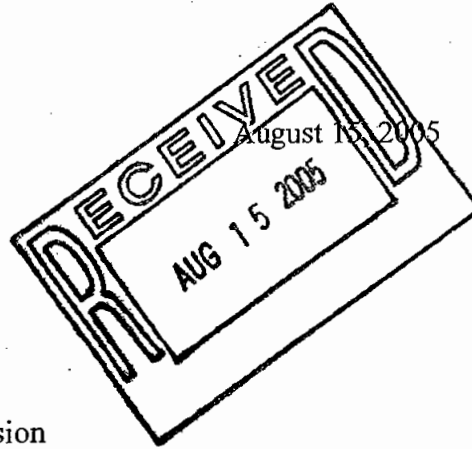


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BY HAND

Hon. Robert B. Tierney  
Chairman  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building  
One Centre Street - 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Congregation Shearith Israel  
8 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street  
Block 1122 Lots 36 & 37  
Central Park West Historic District**

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel ("CSI"), please find enclosed an application for a mixed use building to be built on the site of the current community house, which would be demolished, and the adjacent vacant lot to the west. The plans accompanying this application have been sent directly to Sarah Carroll by separate messenger.

The application and plans provide for a building that contains eight full floors and two penthouse floors. The building will require a variance from the Board of Standards and Appeals to transfer zoning floor area across a district boundary that traverses the CSI zoning lot, as well as to waive height and setback regulations for a portion of the streetwall. In addition, as with the previous application, this application provides a 20 ft rear yard for the community facilities floors 2 through 4, in order to provide much needed institutional space to the Congregation. Inasmuch as a 30 ft rear yard is required, a variance will be required for the rear yard for those floors. There will be no alterations to the designated landmark.

In any fair and balanced analysis, the proposal submitted herewith is a measured and thoughtful response to the Commissioners' comments received on December 9, 2004 regarding the previous 14-storey scheme. That analysis begins with the statement of Vice Chair Vengochea; who best articulated the central conflict:

The fact is that there are probably taller buildings on the avenue and taller buildings in the midblock as well as the lower buildings in the midblock and lower buildings on the avenue. And I think that the variety in heights . . . is a healthy condition.

\* \* \*

I think there is an opportunity. The rich thing about New York City is that . . . we in the Commission can, in fact, encourage this variation. And that variation, I would argue, can break the scale of the midblock to a certain degree but it does not mean that we have to [accept] the scale of the avenue which is 150 feet.

\* \* \*

So I think that is definitely on the right track . . . in the right direction but I think that there needs to be some reconsideration of how the bulk is actually distributed and what its really related to . . . what is the datum that has been selected.

Commissioner Match Suna followed with her remarks, which focused on her believe that the building was too high. She concluded:

I support the project but I feel that it really needs to be reconsidered in terms of its overall height.

Commissioner Olcott stated explicitly that he could support the height of the 14-storey building. We are hopeful that he can support this application with equal conviction.

Commissioner Pike remarked, first by endorsing the previous comments of former Commissioner Kane (below) and then by stating that he would like to see “less height.” He concluded:

I’d like to see a slightly lower building that’s integrated into the block a little more and otherwise I think it’s a magnificent proposal. I certainly hope its going to be brought to a successful conclusion because I agree with Commissioner Kane - this is really an important proposal.

Former Chair Paulsen said of the 14-storey application:

I think there are many unique factors to consider in this application that are worth restating . . . . That we are dealing with this incredibly important individual landmark whose congregation is of national and international significance. And that the preservation of this building, its congregation et cetera, is something that the Commission should be very concerned with in terms of finding for preservation purpose. That the context of this individual landmark is the Central Park West Historic District is interesting in that there is not a uniform typology of

buildings and that the Designation Report did not recognize that in designating the district.

\* \* \*

So the historic pattern of development here was for the higher rise buildings within this distance from the avenue. I do not see this as a midblock site at all.

\* \* \*

I believe this is an appropriate project and I have from the beginning.

Commissioner Kane has also recently left the Commission, but again her views were instrumental in informing the Trustees regarding the changes sought by the Commission. She stated:

[T]here are adjustments that ought to be made to the scale and . . . probably to the height of the building to reduce it somewhat, and I emphasize the "somewhat" rather than anything substantial that I think will make it a better neighbor on the midblock.

\* \* \*

I do want to say that I think its very important that a successful project be developed here. I want to see this application come back, I want to see this application succeed. I think to design something and be able to build something here is extremely important, not certainly just to the applicant but to the preservation of this very wonderful landmark and basically to the process itself and the ability for us to prove that the process works . . . that the kind of give and take that is taking place here is something that can result in something that works for the applicant and for the City as a whole.

Additionally, as you will recall, the previous application also was supported by the Manhattan Borough President and the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

We are hopeful that this application adequately responds to Vice Chairman Venocha's and Commissioners Pike's and Match Suna's concerns. While we respectfully note that these changes will not respond to Commissioner Gratz' comments, this application successfully strengthens its relationship with the designated landmark, with its inevitable siting as a member of the Central Park West silhouette and with its transitioning role as this eclectic block winds its way into the midblock.

Accordingly, Mr Chairman, we ask that the enclosed application be promptly calendared for further discussion and a vote. We look forward to appearing at that public meeting to describe the proposal in greater detail.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelly S. Friedman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shelly S. Friedman

cc: Hon. C. Virginia Fields  
Peter Neustadter  
David Nathan  
Charles Platt  
Sam White  
Howard Rubenstein  
Jack Rudin