

October 27, 2009

**Landmarks Preservation Commission
Designation Hearing
Testimony by Seri Worden**

Re: Upper East Side Historic District Extension

Mr. Chair and Honorable Commissioners:

Thank you thank you. It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I stand before you today testifying on behalf of the proposed Upper East Side Historic District Extension to include 75 buildings in two sections along Lexington Avenue between East 63rd and East 75th Streets. As you all are surely aware, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts hatched the idea of expanding the district to include 192 buildings along Lexington Avenue quite some time ago (nearly seven years by my count).

Because of FRIENDS initiative, an expanded district, with larger boundaries than the extension before us today, was listed on the State and National Register of Historic places in 2006; a great accomplishment with many benefits, but of course we were waiting for this day to truly ensure the districts protection.

FRIENDS has long been vividly aware of the fragile nature of Lexington Avenue's livable and lovable streetscape, its clusters of low rise 19th century rowhouses, elegant pre-war apartment buildings and most importantly its enduring spirit as one of New York City's great main streets. There are wonderful and unusual examples of architecture in the expansion area, such as the remarkable Parge House at East 65th Street and a row of rare surviving stables on East 75th Street. Well known architects and firms have built in the proposed district as well, such as Frederick Sterner, Rouse & Goldstone, Schwartz & Gross and Cross & Cross. Indeed the quality, history and mix of architecture in the extension area are perfectly in keeping with the existing 1981 district.

However, there has been some bad news. The remarkable residential building, known as the Kean House on the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 65th Street was demolished last year. This was a horrific loss to one of the most distinct corners in all of

New York City. We understand that there are numerous permits out for a new building on the site, including what we believe to be a new building permit. Although some of these permits were in place prior to calendaring, we implore the commission to reach out to the developer and use all means necessary to ensure that an appropriate building is constructed at this site, which lies at the heart of the this long overdue district extension.

In addition, while we are so grateful to the LPC for bringing forward the district extension today, we do wish that the boundaries were larger, as our proposed boundaries included many more architecturally significant buildings and blocks from East 60th Street to 76th Street, including such standouts like the former Barbizon Hotel for Women at 813-817 Lexington Avenue and the temple-like Provident Loan Society Building at 180 East 72nd Street, both worthy individual landmarks which merit immediate designation.

This will be the first expansion of the district since its designation in 1981. FRIENDS hopes you will take immediate action and designate the Upper East Side Historic District extension today—ensuring appropriate development while maintaining the low scale, sense of place and historic architecture of this great New York City neighborhood. I suppose you could now say we will be Friends of the even bigger Upper East Side Historic Districts.

Thank you.