



**West End Preservation Society Statement before the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission in  
Support of the Proposed Riverside-West End District Extension I** **March 22, 2011**

Good Afternoon, Chair Tierney and Commissioners. My name is Richard Emery and I am President and co-founded of the West End Preservation Society and am speaking on behalf of the Society today.

The West End Preservation Society strongly supports the proposed designation of the Riverside-West End Historic District Extension I.

As noted by this Commission in December, 1989 for the designation of the Riverside-West End Historic District: "among its important qualities, the Riverside-West End Historic District is defined by a remarkably large concentration of architecturally distinctive and unspoiled examples of residential buildings of high quality; that these residential buildings are characteristic of the development of the Upper West Side west of Broadway during the period from 1884 to 1939 and that the district encompasses a number of residential building types representing different phases of development."

The West End Preservation Society heartily agrees with the past findings of this Commission and believes this same reasoning, reinforced by the conclusions of Andrew Dolkart's exceptional study, *West End Avenue Survey*, previously submitted to the Commission, supports the extension of the boundaries the way it has been proposed. This district extension embodies the special character, historic and aesthetic interest that defines a historic district, in our view.

Step foot onto West End Avenue at 79<sup>th</sup> St and look northward; you are treated to a vista, which illustrates a "sense of place". The two major development phases of West End Ave are visually described in the architecture: brownstones dating back to 1886 and Beaux-Arts French Flats from 1898 alongside a bounty of harmonious apartment buildings, designed by preeminent architects working in Manhattan at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> C: George Pelham, Schwartz & Gross, Neville & Bagge to name but a few, many of their other buildings already enjoying landmark status-some just steps away-on the Avenue.

Sense of place also embodies the human experience and as author Kent Ryden describes it: "the place has become a shaping partner in our lives, we partially define ourselves in its terms, and it carries the emotional charge of a family member..."

I suggest to you that West End Avenue satisfies just that notion. It's a family environment; it is a culture of its own that is unique to the city, created by the cultural history of its geography. The Riverside-West End Historic District Extension I is most definitely such a place.

Broadway with its historic apartment houses and the 1890's First Baptist Church; West End Avenue: designed as a commercial-free, residential boulevard - first with single family row houses and revisited with grand apartment buildings; Riverside Drive, conceived by Frederick Law Olmsted: its magnificent homes, a graceful arc following the Hudson River.

