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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

February 19, 2016

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: 1143 Fifth Avenue (between 95th and 96th Streets) – Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

At the Full Board meeting on Wednesday, February 17, 2016, the board adopted the following resolution regarding **1143 Fifth Avenue (between 95th and 96th Streets) – Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District – Dominic Pilla, architect; Stephen Gallira, owner's representative**. Application is for a vertical enlargement at the roof.

WHEREAS 1143 Fifth Avenue is a 7-story neo-Federal style apartment building designed by J. E. R. Carpenter and constructed in 1922-23.

WHEREAS a set-back penthouse addition was added in 1995 increasing the height of the roof-line to 83'; the set-back is 16' from the front elevation.

WHEREAS J.E.R. Carpenter is considered to be, along with Rosario Candela, one of the two premier apartment house architects during the first half of the Twentieth Century.

WHEREAS 1143 Fifth Avenue sits on a 2-story limestone base topped with red brick and framed with brick quoins; the street wall along Fifth Avenue is narrow at 30'.

WHEREAS 1143 Fifth Avenue was designated as a "contributing building" within the Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District (1993).

WHEREAS at the time the building was constructed, in 1922-23, the zoning code restricted the height of all buildings along 5th Avenue to 75'; the height restriction was overturned shortly after the building was completed, in 1923.

WHEREAS as a result of this anomaly in the zoning code when the building was designed, it is considered "small" in comparison with other 5th Avenue apartment buildings which adds to its charm and uniqueness; the building appears not to have been designed for any kind of a vertical addition.

WHEREAS the applicant, in October, 2015, proposed to build six additional stories on top of 1143 Fifth Avenue, growing the 83'-foot tall apartment building to 13 stories and more than 140'.

WHEREAS the Landmarks Preservation Commission found that it could not approve this proposal and advised the applicant that he would have to substantially reduce the height and visibility of the addition.

WHEREAS the applicant now proposes a smaller addition that would add a 1-story 9'10" floor to the existing 1995 penthouse; the existing penthouse would be completely rebuilt so that the massing of the existing 8th floor penthouse and the massing of the new 9th floor penthouse would present as unified with glazing across most of the 30' width of the new front elevation of floors 8 and 9. [The existing setback would remain unchanged.]

WHEREAS the newly reconstructed double height penthouse [the existing penthouse added in 1995 plus the 10'9" addition] would present as a single mass.

WHEREAS the existing 16' set-back for the now two-story penthouse would be maintained.

WHEREAS the applicant also proposes a new elevator bulkhead that would be set back 28' from the front elevation and a new scissor stair to replace the 7-story fire escape at the rear; the proposed 8' x 8' elevator

bulkhead would extend 6' above the new addition and decrease the visibility of the existing unusual water tower that floats above 1143 Fifth Avenue.

WHEREAS at the rear, the applicant proposes to completely rebuild the existing elevation; the existing side yard will be filled in with approximately 8' added to the building footprint to the north and 20' added the building footprint to the east [approximately 160 sq. ft. per floor].

WHEREAS at the rear, there will be balconies and terracing.

WHEREAS at the ground floor, the applicant proposes a community use facility that will extend to the lot-line; at the second floor, there will be a 16' x 30' terrace that will present as the roof of the community facility.

WHEREAS applicant proposes to retain only 25% of the original building, including the front elevation which will be completely restored.

WHEREAS the vertical enlargement on top of the 8th floor, even though only one story, together with the redesign of the existing penthouse beneath, presents as an approximately 20' high by x 30' wide modern glass box sitting on top of a perfectly proportioned neo-Federal style-building

WHEREAS the bulky, largely glass structure contrasts sharply, overwhelms, and pays no deference to the J.E.R. Carpenter apartment house beneath.

WHEREAS the addition is unusually visible from across the street in Central Park, where there is a change in grade as one crosses 5th Avenue to enter the park

WHEREAS vertical additions to contributing buildings within historic districts are typically minimally visible.

WHEREAS approval of such a highly visible and out-of-context glass design on the top of a contributing building within a historic district sets a dangerous precedent for future development on historic buildings.

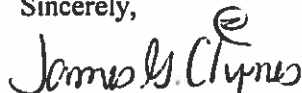
WHEREAS the addition plus the new bulkhead that rises 6' behind it diminishes significantly the visibility of the iconic roof-top water tower at 1143 Fifth Avenue; the water tower presents as a piece of sculpture sitting on the roof of 1143 Fifth Avenue and sandwiched by the two taller apartment buildings on either side of it (1148 Fifth Avenue to the north and 1140 Fifth Avenue to the south). The water tower is a well-defined part of the streetscape along upper 5th Avenue.

WHEREAS 1143 Fifth Avenue is a significant building designed by a significant architect on a significant street.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this application is **disapproved** as presented.

This recommendation was approved by a vote of 34 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions, and 0 not voting for cause.

Sincerely,


James G. Clynes
Chairman


David Helpern and Jane Parshall
Co-Chairs, Landmarks Committee

cc: Honorable Bill de Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York
Honorable Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Honorable Liz Krueger, NYS Senator, 26th Senatorial District
Honorable Dan Quart, NYS Assembly Member, 73rd Assembly District
Honorable Ben Kallos, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District
Honorable Daniel Garodnick, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District