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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Landmarks Committee
Monday, July 17, 2023 – 6:30pm
*This meeting was conducted via Zoom***

PLEASE NOTE: When evaluating Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness, the Landmarks Committee of Community Board 8 Manhattan ONLY considers the appropriateness of the proposal to the architecture of the building and, in the case of a building within a Historic District, the appropriateness of the proposal to the character of that Historic District. All testimony should be related to such appropriateness. The Committee recommends a Resolution to the full Community Board, which votes on a Resolution to be sent to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. These Resolutions are advisory; the decision of the Landmarks Preservation Commission is binding.

Applicants and members of the public who are interested in the issues addressed are invited, but not required, to attend the **Full Board meeting on Wednesday, July 19, 2023**. They may testify for up to three minutes in the Public Session, which they must sign up for no later than 6:45PM. Members of the Board will discuss the items in executive session; if a member of the public wishes a comment made or a question asked at this time, he or she must ask a Board Member to do it.

MINUTES:

Board Members Present: Elizabeth Ashby, Michele Birnbaum, Alida Camp, Sarah Chu, Anthony Cohn, David Helpern, Jane Parshall, Marco Tamayo, Judy Schneider, Kimberly Selway (Public Member).

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 1: 985 Fifth Avenue - Approval

Item 2: 163 East 78th Street - Unanimous Disapproval

1. **985 Fifth Avenue (Metropolitan Museum Historic District)** - *Ward Dennis, Higgins Quasebarth; Willian Sofield, Studio Sofield; Elliot Spitzer, Spitzer Enterprises* - A no-style apartment building designed by Wechsler & Schimenti and constructed in 1970. Application is to demolish the existing building and to construct a new building.

WHEREAS 985 Fifth Avenue is a no-style apartment building designed by Wechsler & Schimenti and constructed in 1970;

WHEREAS 985 Fifth Avenue is now a balconied 25-story apartment building of glass and glazed brick; 985 Fifth Avenue replaced three town houses which had stood on the site; #985, known as one of the Brokaw mansions, #986 and # 987;

WHEREAS 985 Fifth Avenue is considered a non-contributing building within the historic district;

WHEREAS 985 Fifth Avenue is set back from the street wall by a driveway which is not a typical feature of a Fifth Avenue building;

WHEREAS the applicant proposes to construct a new 210' high as-of-right apartment building to replace the existing building using the classic Fifth Avenue prewar vernacular for design details;

WHEREAS the new building will be clad in limestone at the front elevation; the secondary elevations will be clad in brick with limestone detailing;

WHEREAS historic precedents for the new design include both materials and a classical organization for the base, middle/shaft and top/crown of the proposed building; the shafts of antecedent buildings are usually unadorned and the crowns return to a more elaborate decoration and are 3-dimensional; **WHEREAS** fenestration on the Fifth Avenue elevation will be larger with smaller windows on the south, east and west-facing elevations; the simple steel casement windows are set fairly deeply into the wall and present as casements — the casements at the middle of the front elevation flank a fixed window;

WHEREAS the proposed building steps back in stages with the limestone crown/mechanical enclosures stepping back even more; the first set back will occur above the 13th floor, another slight set back will occur at the 18th and 19th floors with crown or top of the building set back even further;

WHEREAS there is a decorative railing at the 5th floor of the front elevation, at the 12th floor of the front elevation, at the 14th floor of the front elevation, at the 16th floor of the front elevation, the 18th floor of the front elevation and at the roof of the front elevation;

WHEREAS at the second floor at the front elevation below each window are a set of curved inward shapes as decoration; these present as a limestone post and rail — with metal spandrels;

WHEREAS the railing levels at the 5th floor, at the 12th floor, at the 14th floor and at the 18th floor have different shapes of cast glass infill set into a limestone panel with limestone railings — the same convex limestone shape that is on the second floor is repeated on each decorative railing with a cast glass decorative panel between;

WHEREAS typically rear elevations along Fifth Avenue are visible from Madison Avenue; the side elevation at the north will be mostly brick with limestone at the crown; the south elevation will be brick with slightly more limestone and at the rear, the not completely unconsidered elevation will be mostly brick with limestone at the crown;

WHEREAS at the south-facing elevation, as it meets the front elevation at the corner, the quoining will be limestone to create a solid corner; although 985 Fifth Avenue is not a corner building, the south elevation is decorated and given a fair amount of consideration in its detailing;

WHEREAS there will be a 4-story rusticated base with a prominent 2-story entrance; the detailing at the rusticated base matches exactly the detailing at its neighbor at 988 Fifth Avenue;

WHEREAS the applicant, in the proposed new building, will re-establish the street wall, include set backs at the upper floors and will shift the bulkhead to the south; the new rear yard will be slightly larger;

WHEREAS the applicant plans a green space/garden at both sides of the front entrance with limestone bollards;

WHEREAS at the north elevation, the facade will be pulled back at the corner so that the beautiful rope moulding at 988 Fifth Avenue remains visible;

WHEREAS instead of the traditional lanterns to provide light at the entrance, there will be a more abstract vertical lighting feature that will present as being perpendicular to the more recessed front door; the entrance awning will float from front to rear;

WHEREAS there will be a dog bar at the left of the entrance door set into base and below the left vertical light column; there will be a sculptured bird set on top of the basin for the dog bar;

WHEREAS the metal or grille work on the entry door will have the numbers 985 subtly set within the grill; the grill with the abstract numbers set into the grill presents as modern and is a way of reminding passers-by of the house that was there previously;

WHEREAS at the service window at the front elevation to the right of the front entrance there is a sculpture of a squirrel with an acorn;

WHEREAS the service door to the south of the front entrance on Fifth Avenue is bronze and in bas relief tells the history of the site highlighting the history especially of the Brokaw houses and their demolition that was a contributing factor to the eventual creation of the Landmarks Preservation Commission; the service door is a homage to what went before;

WHEREAS at the upper part of the building corner cuts diminish the massing; the spandrels for the upper portion are austere; the neoclassical detailing at the upper top or roof includes limestone eggs and limestone railings;

WHEREAS 988 Fifth Avenue, 985's neighbor to the north, will lose some of its lot line windows;

WHEREAS a revocable consent will be required from the Department of Transportation for the part of the green space at the ground at the front elevation that protrudes into the public way;

WHEREAS Studio Sofield is well known for the whimsical touches incorporated into its buildings — in this case the dog fountain and the squirrel — and for its artistic touches such as the grillwork on the front door incorporating the numbers 985 and the repeated patterns as the decorative railings at the front elevation ascend upward and become more elaborate;

WHEREAS the windows at the front elevation present as empty vacant eyes even though deeply set into a flat facade and the building feels too big for the site;

WHEREAS on balance, while the comments about the windows have merit, Studio Sofield brings a unique view with a historical perspective to the proposed design for 985 Fifth Avenue; Studio Scofield is not replicating a 1920s prewar building but rather combining the best elements of a prewar building with a modernist sensibility and is to be applauded;

WHEREAS the attention to detail in the applicant's presentation was superb;

WHEREAS this resolution could never do justice to the applicant's presentation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT this application is approved as presented.

VOTE: 5 for (Ashby, Chu, Cohn, Parshall, Schneider); 2 against (Birnbaum, Camp); 1 abstention (Tamayo); 1 NVFC (Helpert)

1 Public Member in favor: Kimberly Selway

- 2. 163 East 78th Street (Individual Landmark) - Thomas J. Zoli, Principal Architect, Workshop/APD**
- A Vernacular style building with Italianate influence designed by Henry Armstrong and constructed in 1861, combined in 1911, and altered in 1929 and 1939 with the latter by A.L. Muller. Application is for a one-story addition, a rear-yard extension, and window replacement.

WHEREAS the applicant proposes to replace windows, add a two-story extension in the rear, and add a penthouse to this four-story individual landmark;

WHEREAS the building is a double townhouse, 36'-0" wide, 42'-0" high, and 60'-0" long from front to back;

WHEREAS the windows to be replaced on the second and third floors of the front of the building will appear the same as the current windows as to proportions and thickness of mullions and muntins;

WHEREAS the proposed windows will visually replicate the transoms of the current windows, will be full height, and will replicate the original French doors;

WHEREAS the metal gates on the current windows will be removed and replaced with metal railings;

WHEREAS the existing cast stone sills under the third-floor windows will be replaced with brownstone sills to match sills and lintels on the face of the building;

WHEREAS the ground floor façade will be similar to the existing;

WHEREAS the double lintel over the service door at the eastern end will be changed to the single lintel that runs across the face of the building;

WHEREAS the brick on the stucco on the fourth floor will be replaced with brick to match the brick below;

WHEREAS the punched in windows on the fourth floor will be extended to full height and will match the French doors and windows on the second and third floors;

WHEREAS the front façade will be raised twelve inches to match the height of the party wall to the west and a metal cap in the color family of the brownstone will be added;

WHEREAS the building will be extended in the rear so that the third and fourth floor facades align with the facades of the adjacent townhouses and the first and second floors extended further to an overall length of 70 feet, to leave a 32-foot-long rear yard;

WHEREAS a conservatory type structure, about half the width of the building, will be added on the easterly end of the third floor;

WHEREAS the facade of the first and second floors in the rear will be divided into four bays;
WHEREAS the two bays in the center on the ground floor will be fully glazed with glass doors to the garden;
WHEREAS the two side bays on the ground floor will have full width windows that start about 3'-0" above grade;
WHEREAS all four bays of the second floor will be fully glazed;
WHEREAS the two bays of the conservatory will be fully glazed;
WHEREAS the first and second floors and the conservatory will have large-scale, multi-pane glazing;
WHEREAS the west half of the third floor and the fourth floor will have punched in multi-pane windows;
WHEREAS the fourth floor will have a multi-pane glass door to the roof of the conservatory;
WHEREAS the penthouse to be added to the fourth-floor roof will be placed towards the rear of the building with a small setback from the rear façade;
WHEREAS the front of the penthouse will be a sloped, south facing skylight;
WHEREAS the rear façade will have multi-pane windows;
WHEREAS the penthouse will be 11'-11" high in relation to the roof;
WHEREAS the overall height of the building to the top of the penthouse will be 52'-8" and the overall height to the top of the elevator shaft and mechanical equipment will be 55'-6";
WHEREAS the mock-up of the penthouse is highly visible from the corner of East 78th Street and Lexington Avenue;
WHEREAS the areaway will not be changed in size;
WHEREAS the free form planting areas in the areaway will be changed to symmetrical "L" shaped planters on the east and west sides;
WHEREAS the low brick wall will be replaced with a new brick wall, the bluestone paving will be replaced with new bluestone paving, a new bluestone ramp will be set at the eastern edge of the areaway to lead to the service door, and the existing black metal railing and gates will be refurbished and reinstalled;
WHEREAS the proposed, highly glazed rear façade is contemporary and not consistent with the overall character of the historic facades;
WHEREAS the proposed penthouse is not in character with the historic architecture and is highly visible from street level;
WHEREAS the proposed additions to the house are not contextual and appropriate for this individual landmark;
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this application is **DISAPPROVED**.

VOTE: 8 for (Ashby, Birnbaum, Camp, Chu, Cohn, Helpern, Parshall, Tamayo)

1 Public Member in favor: Kimberly Selway

3. Old Business – None Discussed
4. New Business– None Discussed

Respectfully Submitted, David Helpern and Jane Parshall, Co-Chairs