



DANIEL O'DONNELL
Member of Assembly
69TH Assembly District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
Subcommittee on
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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
LAND USE COMMITTEE OF COMMUNITY BOARD 7
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2007

Good evening. My name is Daniel O'Donnell and I am a Member of the New York State Assembly, 69th District, elected to represent the residents of Manhattan Valley, Morningside Heights and the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Thank you for the opportunity to state my unequivocal opposition to Application #N080110ZRY by the American Institute of Architects to the Department of City Planning to amend the Zoning Resolution.

For nearly two full years, this community labored over a zoning resolution that was only recently implemented, finally offering long-deserved and demanded protection from out-of-scale development. As many in this room can attest, the process was generally laborious, sometimes frustrating, and utterly democratic. The package, when completed, was lauded by City Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden as a model for community-government collaboration. This entire process would be compromised by this amendment, which would effectively eliminate the rezoning resolution's carefully considered contextual limits, developed jointly by the community and Department of City Planning.

I advocate for disapproval of this amendment on several grounds. The proposed change is counter to the lengthy democratic process undertaken by my community to downzone and protect the character of this neighborhood. It is also unnecessary. A mechanism already exists for building outside of the prescribed zoning: undergoing an established community review process and convincing those most impacted that the project is worthy of a variance. Also unacceptable is the amendment's probable impact on historic districts. Historic district designation confirms not only the architectural consistency and significance of an area, but also implies that the area could be prey to development or façade alterations that would compromise its historical value and integrity.

That the ULURP application, and thus the Community Board's opportunity for review, are occurring during the busiest time of the year, with little notice, demands redress. Community review is only meaningful when the community has been given sufficient time to analyze the issue and develop a response. I urge Community Board 7 to disapprove this application on the grounds that it is unnecessary and, most importantly, that it negates the rezoning process so recently completed and celebrated in this community.

Thank you.