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**Statement of Council Member Daniel R. Garodnick  
Public Hearing on Application for 980 Madison Avenue  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
October 24, 2006**

Chairman Tierney and members of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, thank you for the opportunity to make a brief statement regarding the proposed development at 980 Madison Avenue.

I represent the East Side of Manhattan from 14<sup>th</sup> to 97<sup>th</sup> Streets, which includes the Parke-Bernet building at 980 Madison Avenue. As you know, this address is squarely within the borders of the Upper East Side Historic District as well as the Madison Avenue Preservation Special District. As a result, this area's distinct sense of place is protected by both landmark regulations and zoning laws. According to the City Planning Commission, the purpose of the Special District is to "preserve and reinforce the unique character of Madison Avenue," through provisions that "limit the height of new development to the scale of existing buildings."<sup>1</sup>

The proposal before the Commission today matches neither the scale nor the character of the neighborhood. It calls for a 355 foot, modern glass tower to stand amid the low-rise, stone-clad landmarks that define the neighborhood's essence. That tower does not resonate with any of the surrounding historic buildings, such as the Gertrude Rhineland Waldo House which combines late Gothic and early Renaissance motifs;<sup>2</sup> the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, with its Venetian Renaissance style parish house;<sup>3</sup> the Oliver Gould and Mary Brewster Jennings House and Henry and Jessie Sloane House, which are two of the finest Beaux-Arts townhouses in New York, with carved stone, Ionic columns, and great detail in their mansard roofs; or any of the countless other individual landmarks in the immediate vicinity.<sup>4</sup> In addition, it is my

<sup>1</sup> New York City Department of City Planning, *Zoning Handbook* (New York, NY, 2006): 78.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew S. Dolkart, *Touring the Upper East Side, Walks in Five Historic Districts*, NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY at 53-54 (1995)

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 55

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 53.

understanding that the proposed building is nearly double the height allowed by current zoning regulations. Simply put, a 355 foot modern glass tower cannot work here.

I also have certain process concerns about this application. Such a project needs to be considered in a procedure that allows for substantial review by all necessary bodies while also respecting the need for community input. However, this project is moving at a breakneck pace. I myself first read of it only two weeks ago today when it was reported in *The New York Times* on October 10, 2006. I was briefed by representatives of the developer the next day. In the very few days since, the local community board had an opportunity to recommend disapproval of this project twice – once at the Landmark Committee (by a vote of 6-3) and once at the full board (by a vote of 20-13-2).

In this short time, the project has also earned the disapproval of the Municipal Arts Society, the New York City Landmarks Conservancy, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, and the Historic Districts Council. In light of the considerable objections, as well as the short time frame that has been presented, I ask that the Landmarks Commission allow the record to remain open for this public session so that the community has the chance to comment on this project further. Additionally, I ask that the Commission consider another public session during the course of its review process.

I appreciate as much as anyone the importance of growth in New York City, and yes, even on the Upper East Side. We cannot allow the City to stagnate from lack of development. However, development must come in a manner that respects the historic integrity and character of this neighborhood. Unfortunately, I do not believe that this tall, modern, glass building respects the height requirements or the architectural context of the Historic District and special zoning preservation district in which it sits.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.