



April 29, 1982

Ms. Rita Chu
130 East 67th Street
New York, New York 10021

Dear Ms. Chu:

Thank you for joining the Community "Steering Committee for the "Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District." Enclosed is the material I mentioned to you on the phone the other day. Let me briefly explain to you the history of the District, why such an organization is being formed, and your role as a member of the Community Steering Committee.

As you know, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the Upper East Side Historic District in May of 1981. In September of 1981 the Board of Estimate unanimously approved the District as drawn by the Commission. Enclosed is a map of the District. After the District had been in existence for only a few months, community preservationists and the Municipal Art Society saw the need for an organization to watch over the District. Applications for dramatic changes were being submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Significant controversies arose on 71st and 63rd Streets. While to date neighborhood groups have been successful in their efforts to prevent inappropriate development, community residents on these and other blocks have had to organize and fight each proposal without the benefit of a central group that could assist them in their efforts, utilizing the shared experiences of the different groups.

The Municipal Art Society, because of its long involvement with the effort to designate the District, felt a responsibility to assist in the establishment of the needed community group to watch over the District. To that end the Society applied for and received two grants to fund a six month start-up effort to create a watchdog organization similar to associations in the other historic districts. These grants have allowed the Society to hire a project coordinator,

myself, and permit the Society to provide limited support services for the grant period.

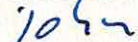
The Community Steering Committee will be influential in determining the future course of the association. The people asked to serve on the Steering Committee are active community leaders experienced in community issues affecting the Upper East Side. Enclosed is a list of your fellow committee members. The present thinking is for the Committee to exist for 2 or 3 months. Then an Interim Board of Directors will be formed. As members of the Community Steering Committee you will become members of the Interim Board of Directors. The other members of the Interim Board will be chosen by the Steering Committee. The Interim Board of Directors will exist until next Spring. The Steering Committee, and then the Interim Board of Directors, will be responsible for setting policy guidelines for the organization as well as ensuring that the organization's activities are carried out.

"Friends" will be concerned with historic preservation and urban planning issues, and related concerns. One of the association's first projects will be educating people as to what it means to live or work in the Historic District. "Friends" will encourage appropriate alterations in the District. "Friends" will also develop a system of monitoring the District, checking alterations for proper permits, and pursuing compliance with Landmark regulations. Just as important, the organization will actively support local groups' and individuals' efforts to prevent inappropriate changes to structures in the District. This support will include testifying at public hearings, organizing campaigns, and whatever else is necessary to support the goals of designation.

I hope this helps clarify your understanding of this new organization and what your role will be in shaping it. Because of your interest and experience in the District you will be a most valuable addition to this organization as it becomes established. The enclosed information will more fully explain the goals and structure of "Friends." You have a chance to play a major role in ensuring the District's future.

The first meeting of the Community Steering Committee will be on Tuesday, May 4, at 5:30 p.m., at the Urban Center, 457 Madison Avenue, at 51st St. If you have any questions, feel free to call me at 935-3960.

Sincerely,



John Weiss
Project Coordinator
Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District Project