

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**June 2, 2009**

**Council Member Gale A. Brewer, 6<sup>th</sup> District, West Side of Manhattan**

RE: 15 West 68 Street, Manhattan

I thank Chairman Tierney and the Landmarks Preservation Commission for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I represent the residents of the West Side of Manhattan, from West 54 Street to West 96<sup>th</sup> Street, in the City Council.

I would first like to commend Community Board 7's Parks and Preservation Committee for their tireless efforts and their thoughtfulness regarding this application. The committee heard the presentation of this applicant at three separate monthly meetings.

In addition, I am aware of the applicant's willingness to postpone their hearing in front of the Landmarks Preservation Commission in order to make further changes, as requested by Community Board 7, to the proposed restoration plan.

I am aware of the Community Board 7's approval of the maintenance plan, and I concur that the restoration plan proposed by the applicant exceeds the normal obligation of an owner in the Historic District.

Thus, while I support this particular application before the Commission in its specifics, I want to register my deep concern about the underlying nature of the applicant's proposal, which involves a change of use. Such changes, while they may not outwardly alter the physical context of a Historic District, inevitably impact the residential nature of the surrounding buildings, their owners and inhabitants, long-term property and privacy concerns, and the residential nature of a neighborhood itself.

There are many examples on the both the East and West Sides of Manhattan of the life-altering impacts on a block and its residents when institutional users occupy what had been residential settings. Therefore I take this opportunity to urge the applicant, going forward, to work as closely with the Land Use Committee of Community Board 7 as they have with the Parks and Preservation Committee. They must address these and related concerns, and mitigate potential impacts on the lives of those who view such buildings and their surroundings not as merely property or investment but as home, and with all of the implicit protections and privacy concerns that residential settings entail, and that set them apart from commercial and institutional ones.

Thank you for your time and attention in giving this application your most careful consideration.