



GRAMERCY PARK BLOCK ASSOCIATION, INC.

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**Testimony before NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
Arlene Harrison - Tuesday, July 16, 2013**

Good afternoon. My name is Arlene Harrison and I'm here to speak in strong support of the restoration of the porch and stoop at 5 Gramercy Park West. I'm Founder and President of The Gramercy Park Block Association, an organization of 2,000 people, most of whom live within the Gramercy Park Historic District and who take proposals regarding our buildings very seriously. I am also a Trustee of Gramercy Park. I am here to speak on behalf of both groups.

I have spoken to many of our Gramercy Park community leaders and my fellow Park Trustee and Vice President of The Gramercy Park Block Association the Rev. Dr. Thomas F. Pike has this to say:

"I have carefully studied the proposed restoration of the Stoop and Porch for 5 Gramercy Park West. The Owner's vision to remake a true cast iron stoop and porch will once again unify the architecture of Gramercy Park West.

Built in 1843, 5 Gramercy Park West was one of the first houses built on Gramercy Park and part of a sequence of four row houses all with cast iron porches. The porch was removed in the 1920's and the building divided into apartments.

Early photographs of Gramercy Park West will support the concept of continuous porch along the facades of these important townhouses. Incidentally the porches resonate with the fence around Gramercy Park, which is "called out" as an important feature in this Historic District.

As a forty year resident on Gramercy Park I am impressed how this proposal appropriately recalls the history of this block. It is a gift for all the public to enjoy and it will clearly enhance the Gramercy Park Historic District in the most appropriate way."

Alexander SC Rower, the Owner of the house and Grandson of the renowned American Artist Alexander Calder, acquired the 5 Gramercy Park West in 2004 as a residence for his family. In the Fall of 2011 he collaborated with the Trustees of Gramercy Park and The Gramercy Park Block Association to contribute to the life of the park and neighborhood by loaning a Alexander Calder sculpture to the park. The Calder sculpture has been a wonderful addition to the Historic District. Since Gramercy Park has visual accessibility, the sculpture is enjoyed not only by those who have keys to the park, but also by the countless numbers of people who pass by on the surrounding sidewalks.

To continue his close and long term commitment as a resident of Gramercy Park, Rower has proposed to restore the Porch and Stoop in a historically appropriate design recalling its original magnificent ornament and grandeur.

For the past 43 years I have spent a great deal of time working to maintain the historic nature of our community. We like the way the neighborhood looks, we treasure its history, and we feel that this is an appropriate plan that is consistent with our efforts. We feel this plan will have a significant positive impact on both the building's historic presence, and as part of the Gramercy Park Historic District. The Trustees of Gramercy Park and The Gramercy Park Block Association very much hope that you will approve this application.

Thank you very much,

Arlene Harrison

Arlene S. Harrison, President