



Testimony from the Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) regarding 361 Central Park West

March 3, 2020

First, MAS very much appreciates that the Children's Museum of Manhattan is going to breathe new life into the First Church of Christian Science, a 1903 landmark designed by Carrere & Hastings. We are grateful to the project team for their continued patience and understanding in executing this complex case of adaptive reuse.

In our initial review of the project, the Preservation Committee was pleased with the project team's reverence for the monumental granite structure of the church, but found the rooftop addition to be insufficiently sensitive to the historic roofline, in both its architectural vocabulary and prominence. Through dialogue with the team, this concern has been lessened though not entirely mitigated. In particular, the reinforcement of the terra cotta roof is welcome. However, a further reduction in height and bulk would be preferable. In the end, the programming is driving the addition, and further reorganization of interior use might lead to a more sympathetic outcome on the exterior.

The Committee was also concerned that the replacement of the stained glass windows with transparent panes results in unintended contrast between solid and void, not to mention a loss of historic fabric. The retention of the bordering panes of stained glass, rather than wholesale elimination, is ultimately a reasonable compromise.

In sum, the MAS Preservation Committee hopes that the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the applicant can come to a resolution that will allow for the desired new use of this important landmark while maintaining its character.