

The Dodge Site

Even with construction at a virtual standstill, it was inevitable that the site of the Dodge mansion at Fifth Avenue and 61st Street would find a buyer and developer; its location on Central Park adjacent to Grand Army Plaza makes it one of the most expensive, elegant and pivotal building blocks in New York.

Not only will the plan, appearance and quality of the new building affect everything around it on the most visible, public level; but this will also be the first construction in the new Park Improvement District. Under this zoning, the builder gets the bulk bonus usually given for a plaza, which would be pointless here, in return for a cash contribution to park maintenance.

The building that the City Planning Commission is being asked to approve today is a negotiated design, resulting in a better site plan, better distribution of bulk and a better designed structure—far more sensitive to its setting than New York would otherwise get.

That is not a bad score. And \$225,000 for the park, while a drop in the bucket of need, is not bad measured against zero in city funds. The replacement will not be limestone-clad luxury in the Fifth Avenue tradition; but making luxury out of building economics today takes Houdini, not Hardenbergh. There are still some serious design problems; but the proposal is generally acceptable except for the inclusion of public parking. This building could be a distinct improvement on the kind of third-rate design and construction that this architecturally abused city usually gets.