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Lincoln Center Housing Plan Opposed

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ
West Side planning board voted last night to oppose efforts by developer Paul Millstein to build a 43 story luxury apartment house across from Lincoln Center.

Millstein has applied to the Board of Standards and Appeals for a variance that would allow him to build the largest luxury apartment house to be erected on the West Side in recent years.

The proposed building, on the east side of Broadway between 62d and 63d Streets, is within the Lincoln Square zoning district created by the city to encourage good design, store arcades and other amenities.

The district, bounded

roughly by 60th and 68th Streets, Amsterdam Avenue and Central Park West, has been undergoing the most extensive reprivate development on the West Side.

Against

According to the resolution approved by Planning Board No. 7 by a vote of 25 to 3, Millstein's proposal "constitutes a massive attack on both the concept of the special district and the entire zoning ordinance and is antithetical to good land use planning."

The Board of Standards and Appeals, which has the power to grant zoning variances, will hold a public hearing on the matter next Tuesday, July 16.

"This is the biggest test of the special district we have yet to encounter," noted Planning Board chairman Robert Kagan, following last night's meeting. "It is largest variance request we have ever dealt with."

Millstein was the developer of One Lincoln Plaza, the two-tone brown apartment tower just north of the new site. Designed by architect Phillip Birnbaum, One Lincoln Plaza has been a source of design and size controversy in the community since it was completed in 1971.

Birnbaum is the architect for the new building, which will be comparable in height to One Lincoln Plaza but considerably larger in bulk.

Four other new apartment buildings are currently under construction in the district, all meeting the zoning regulations and none requiring a zoning variance.

If built within the limits of the special district requirements, the new Millstein building would be allowed a floor area ratio of 14.4, including bonus space allowed for special amenities. The ratio—known as FAR—is the amount of floor area allowed in regulation to the sizes of the building lot.

One Lincoln Plaza has a ratio of 16.9 because construction began before the

establishment of the special zoning district.

For the new buildings, however, Millstein is asking for a ratio of 21.6. That is "the maximum allowable bulk that can be granted for any residential building in the city," says a spokesman for the City Planning Commission.

The issue is a crucial one, says Kagan, because "if he gets the requested FAR, the special district is a dead issue. The precedent will be set and every builder in the district will rush to the Board of Standards and Appeals with the same request. It jeopardizes the whole zoning ordinance."

According to Charles G. Moerdler, the former city buildings commissioner and the attorney representing Millstein, the builder is applying for this variance because of "hardships" produced in part by the economics of construction and land costs and in part because of the limitations imposed by the special district regulations.

Interested groups within the district and throughout the city are joining together, Kagan said, to oppose the variance. If the Board of Standards and Appeals approves it, Kagan added, they are considering a law suit.

Additional Information . . .