

Landmark Battle Continues

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

Preservationists and community residents again took before the Board of Standards and Appeals today their battle to save a small corner of 19th century New York.

A decision is expected on Oct. 24 on whether the owners of the corner at Fifth Av. and 82d St. should be allowed to build a 24-story apartment house without a garage.

When efforts began several months ago to prevent the wreckers ball from eliminating one of the last remaining rows of low-rise mansions on Fifth Av., there were four threatened structures — three on the avenue facing the Metropolitan Museum and one on 82d St. Two of the Fifth Av. houses have already been demolished but neighborhood groups have not given up hope of at least preserving the 82d St. block, with eventual landmark designation.

The corner land parcel—owned by the real estate complex of Sol Goldman and Alex D'Arcangelo, one of the largest private landholders in the city — is zoned R-10, which means that a residential building larger than 10,000 square feet cannot be built without a garage. The owners have applied for a zoning variance, which needs board approval to allow them to build a slightly larger structure with no garage.

No Guarantee

The decision on the variance by the Standards and Appeals body, which will not be forthcoming for at least a week or two after arguments are heard, has no direct bearing on whether this landmark quality corner can be preserved, since the owners can proceed to build a smaller structure within zoning limitations without the variance.

Community forces, however, are hoping a variance denial will delay the builders long enough so that the Landmarks Preservation Commission can consider declaring the 82d St. block an official landmark.

There is widespread community opposition to the proposed structure. Many neighboring residents are concerned about who would live in the mostly two-room, 147-unit building.

"They'll probably rent for \$400 and who but hoodlums or business executives needing second apartments for the wrong reasons can afford that?," asked one neighboring tenant.

Possible Tenants

A larger, citywide group of preservationists argue that the old mansions of this area are among the "architectural elite" of the city and that it is the only proper acting to face the Metropolitan Museum. The buildings as a unit, it is argued, "work in combination to form a streetscape unparalleled in the city."