

# AIA New York Chapter

The Founding Chapter of The American Institute of Architects

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Chair Robert Tierney  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
1 Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York NY 10007

Dear Chair Tierney,

On behalf of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and its 4,300 architect and public members, we are writing to express our strong support for the individual designation of the Interborough Rapid Transit Powerhouse. Designed by the renowned architect Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White, the IRT Powerhouse is worthy of designation not only for its architectural merit but as a significant example of the development of New York City's infrastructure.

At the time of its completion in 1904, the IRT Powerhouse was the largest powerhouse in the world and provided power to the first subway line in New York. One of the few infrastructure buildings designed by White, the IRT Powerhouse is an unusual example of the architect's work and is among the most imposing of his projects. The building exemplifies White's Beaux-Arts style, with its elegant arched composition and Classical and Renaissance-inspired details. Many of these architectural elements survive today. Unfortunately, demolition has destroyed all of the original smokestacks that were integral to the expression of the building. In March of this year, the last smokestack from 1904 was removed.

The IRT Powerhouse is both a great work of architecture and an important part of the history of rapid transit in New York. As noted in a previous Landmarks application, "by commissioning such a grand design for a very functional purpose, the IRT Company was visually expressing its belief in the greatness, usefulness, and civic importance of this new mode of transportation." The IRT transformed what could have been an ordinary industrial building into the flagship power station of its day, and in doing so, asserted the civic role of architecture and created a monument to New York City's subway system.

We strongly urge the Commission to designate the IRT Powerhouse.

Sincerely yours,

Sherida Paulsen, FAIA  
2009 Chapter President

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