



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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Statement of the Historic Districts Council  
Designation Hearing

July 14, 2009

Item 2  
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN  
LP 2374  
INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT POWERHOUSE

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts and neighborhoods meriting preservation.

Heard in 1979 and 1990, the Interborough Rapid Transit Powerhouse was added in 2005 to HDC's list of 21 priority heard, but not designated buildings. In the four years since, eleven structures on the list have been designated and ten, including the Powerhouse, still wait in landmarks limbo. As we work on an updated list of priorities, HDC is very happy at the prospect of not having to include this building.

Stanford White was able to design in 1904 what today seems like a minor miracle – a utilitarian structure that was highly elegant and ornate. It was all in a day's work though for White and other City Beautiful proponents who believed that public improvements should be built to create a city that was both functional and beautiful. We have them to thank for many of our city's finest landmarks including libraries, schools, bathhouses and parks.

With one glance at the Powerhouse, it is easy to see it is already a landmark, and deserves official recognition to ensure its survival. This monumental structure is a remarkable example of Beaux-Arts design applied to a utilitarian building. In addition to its architectural significance, the building holds an important place in industrial history. When it was opened 105 years ago, it was the largest powerhouse in the world and provided the energy needed to run the subway which in turn created the modern city of New York.

Despite the loss of the smoke stacks, the IRT Powerhouse remains a commanding presence. HDC urges you to designate this masterpiece before anymore is lost.