



Riverside South Planning Corporation



July 7, 2009

Hon. Robert B. Tierney  
Chair  
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
1 Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10007

Re: Former IRT Powerhouse, West 58<sup>th</sup>-59<sup>th</sup> Street, between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues

Dear Chair Tierney:

Congratulations and thank you for scheduling a public hearing on July 14, 2009, to consider designating the former Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) Powerhouse as an official New York City Landmark. This will be the third designation hearing on this monumental Beaux-Arts building, designed by McKim, Mead & White and opened in 1904 to provide electricity for New York's first subway system. Current owner Consolidated Edison's recent removal of the last surviving original smokestack underscores the urgency of acting now to finally grant the Powerhouse the landmark protection it so justly deserves.

The Powerhouse remains one of our city's most compelling examples of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial design. In a significance statement issued for one of its prior designation hearings, the Landmarks Commission called the Powerhouse "the embodiment of the aesthetic ideals of the civic-minded City Beautiful movement... which held that public improvements could beautify American industrial cities." The building's potential to serve as a public amenity, enriching the lives of all New Yorkers and visitors to the city, survives to this day.

Enclosed is a copy of a report recently completed by graduate students in Columbia University's Master's Program in Historic Preservation, "Preserving the Former IRT Powerhouse: A Preservation Plan," together with copies of letters from leading architectural historians, preservation advocates and public officials. All agree that this monumental Beaux-Arts building is a "masterpiece," "a great work, a monument to the new era," "uplifting, civic-minded," "one of only a handful of great powerhouses remaining in the five boroughs," "the largest powerhouse in the world" when it opened in 1904, "extraordinary," "an integral piece of New York City's architectural and transportation history," "a stunning combination of structural practicality and esthetic brilliance."

*Over, please*

Your action will be very timely. The Department of City Planning is considering the plan for the Extell property immediately north of the Powerhouse, and we expect a ULURP to begin before the end of the year. Timely approval of this designation is required to make sure the special landmark-worthy characteristics of the Powerhouse are reflected in the plan.

Together, we urge you to vote "aye" to give the IRT Powerhouse official landmark status at last.

Sincerely,



Susan Tunick  
President  
Friends of Terra Cotta



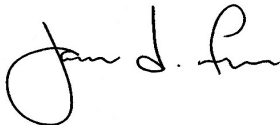
Kate Wood  
Executive Director  
Landmark West!



Simeon Bankoff  
Executive Director  
Historic Districts Council



Jeff Sholeen  
President  
Metropolitan Chapter of  
The Victorian Society of America



Jimmy Finn  
Co-Founder  
Hudson River Powerhouse Group



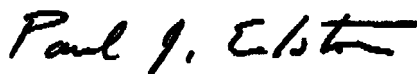
Lisa Kersavage  
Senior Director for MAS Advocacy and Policy  
Municipal Art Society of New York



Paul Gunther  
President  
Institute of Classical Architecture  
& Classical America



Peg Breen  
President  
New York Landmarks Conservancy



Paul J. Elston  
President  
Riverside South Planning Corporation



Mary Habstritt  
Preservation Chair  
Roebling Chapter,  
Society for Industrial Archaeology

cc. Hon. Fred Bland; Hon. Stephen Byrns; Hon. Diana Chapin; Hon. Joan Gerner; Hon. Roberta Brandes Gratz;  
Hon. Christopher Moore; Hon. Margery Perlmutter; Hon. Elizabeth Ryan; Hon. Pablo Vengoechea;  
Hon. Roberta Washington

Encls.